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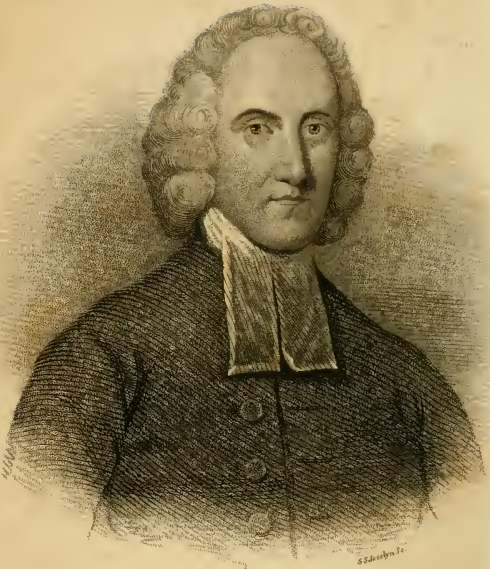
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ASTOR, LENOX AND
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THE
TREATISE

ON

RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS,

BY THE LATE

REV. JONATHAN EDWARDS, A. M.

SOMEWHAT ABRIDGED.

by
W. Ellerbe



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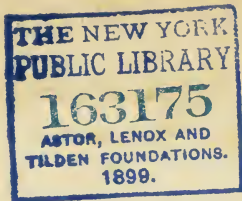
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This edition of this invaluable Treatise is that of W. ELLERBY, slightly abridged, and with some emendations suggested by a careful collation with the original work. Mr. ELLERBY, attributing his own confirmed hope in Christ in no small degree to the instrumentality of this Treatise, and having subsequently, for a considerable period, made it his constant companion, was induced, in the hope of presenting it in a more acceptable and attractive form, to transcribe the entire work; attempting, with the most scrupulous fidelity, to present the precise thoughts of EDWARDS, as far as practicable in his own language, but in a more modern and perspicuous style; with no addition, and the omission only of his tautologies, redundances, repetitions and more extended illustrations.

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INTRODUCTION.

THERE is no question of greater importance to every individual of mankind than this: What are the distinguishing qualifications of those that are in favor with God, and entitled to his eternal rewards? or, which is the same thing, what is the nature of true religion? and wherein consists that holiness, which is acceptable in the sight of God? But though it is of such importance, and though we have sufficient light in the word of God to direct us in the inquiry, yet there is no question upon which professing Christians are more divided. "Strait" indeed "is the gate, and narrow" indeed "is the way, that leads to life, and few there be that find it."

The consideration of these things has long engaged my serious attention. Upon this subject my mind has been peculiarly intent ever since I entered on the study of divinity. How far I have succeeded in my inquiries, must be left to the judgment of the readers of this Treatise.

Under the present circumstances of religious controversy in this country, it is difficult to judge impartially of the subject of this discourse. It is probable that many readers will be displeas'd upon finding so much of religious affections condemn'd; and others, upon finding so much approved. For thus discriminating, I shall, perhaps, be charg'd with inconsistency, as I have often been since the commencement of our late controversies about religion: Indeed, it was no

easy matter to be a cordial and zealous friend of what was really good; and at the same time perceive, and earnestly oppose what was evil and pernicious. It is truly mysterious, that so much that is wrong should be allowed to remain in the church of God. That much false should mingle itself with true religion, at a time of great revival, is, however, no new thing. This was the case in the reign of Josiah, (Jer. 3 : 10, and 4 : 3;) during the ministry of John the Baptist, (John, 5 : 35;) under the preaching of Jesus Christ: in the days of the apostles; and at the time of the reformation from popery. It appears to have been in the visible church, in times of great revival, as it is with fruit-trees in the time of spring: all appears fair and beautiful, promising abundance of fruit; but much of this appearance is of short continuance, and in general only a small part of the fruit arrives at maturity.

It is by mixing counterfeit with true religion, that the devil has always gained the greatest advantage against the cause of Christ. It is by this means principally that he has prevailed against all general revivals of religion since the founding of the Christian church. By this he injured the cause of Christianity in the apostolic age, and in the period immediately succeeding, much more than by all the persecutions of both Jews and heathens; by this he prevailed against the reformation, begun by Luther, Zuinglius, and others, far more than by all the bloody persecutions of the Church of Rome; by this, about a hundred years ago, he prevailed against New-England, quenching the love and marring the joy of her espousals; and I have had sufficient opportunity of perceiving clearly, that by this he has prevailed against the late great revival of religion amongst us, so happy and promising at its commencement. Here he has most evidently gained his vain advantage against us, and by this he has foiled us.

During revivals of religion, those persons who are engaged to defend its cause, are, in general, most exposed where they are least apprehensive of danger. While they are wholly intent upon the opposition which presents itself before them, the grand enemy of the church comes behind, and gives them a fatal stab before they perceive it. As he is not opposed by any guard, he strikes at his leisure, and wounds the deeper. At such seasons, the friends of Christ do the work of enemies, the people of God are scattered, and religion degenerates into vain jangling. Professing Christians are divided into parties, each taking an opposite course, until the right path is nearly forsaken. The confidence of the people of God is shaken, and their minds perplexed with doubts, while heresy, infidelity and atheism spread themselves abroad.

As it has been, so it probably will be, whenever religion is greatly revived, till we have learned to distinguish between saving experience and affections, and those numerous fair shows, and specious appearances, by which they are counterfeited.

My design in the ensuing Treatise is to contribute my mite, and to use my best endeavors to this end. In a former publication,* I attempted to show the distinguishing *marks of the work of the Spirit of God*, including both his common and his saving influences; but what I have now in view, is to describe the *nature of the gracious operations* of the Holy Spirit, and to point out the peculiar signs by which they are distinguished from every thing besides, of which the mind of man can possibly be the subject. If I have succeeded in

* His "Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of many Hundred Souls in Northampton, and the Neighboring Towns and Villages of New Hampshire, in New-England," a publication frequently referred to in the ensuing work.

any tolerable degree, I hope this work will tend to promote the interest of religion. And whether I have succeeded or not, I hope, through the mercy of a gracious God, to obtain from him the acceptance of my endeavors, and from the real followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, their candor and their prayers

A
TREATISE
ON
RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS.

PART FIRST.

ON THE NATURE OF THE AFFECTIONS, AND THEIR
IMPORTANCE IN RELIGION.

1 Peter, 1 : 8.

* Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

THE Apostle here describes the state of mind of the Christians he addressed, while they were suffering those persecutions and " manifold temptations" referred to in the preceding verses, as the " trial of their faith."

Such trials benefit religion. They *try* the faith of professors, and show whether it is genuine. They exhibit the *beauty, amiableness, and excellency* of true religion, which never appears so lovely as when it is most oppressed. They also tend to *purify* it from corrupt mixtures, establish and confirm it, and render it more lively and vigorous.

In the text, the Apostle shows the effect of trials on those to whom he wrote. There were two kinds of

operation, or exercise of true religion, of which he takes particular notice.

1. Love to Christ: "Whom having not seen, ye love." Though there was nothing that the world saw, or that Christians themselves then saw, which thus influenced and supported them; yet they had a supernatural love of something unseen: they loved Jesus Christ, and by this affection they were influenced and supported.

2. Joy in Christ: Though their sufferings were grievous, yet their spiritual joys were greater; and these supported them, and enabled them to suffer with cheerfulness. There are two things of which the apostle takes particular notice respecting this joy.

(1.) The way in which Christ, though unseen, is the foundation of it, that is, by faith: "In whom, though now ye see him not, yet *believing*, ye rejoice."

(2.) The nature of this joy: "*Unspeakable and full of glory.*" Unspeakable in kind; very different from worldly joys and carnal delights; of a vastly more pure, sublime, and heavenly nature; the sublimity and greatness of which words could not express. Unspeakable also in degree, it having pleased God, in their state of persecution, to communicate to them this holy joy with a bountiful and liberal hand.

Their joy was "full of glory." It was unspeakable—no words were sufficient to describe it—yet something might be said of it, and no words were more adapted to represent its excellency than these—*full of glory*; or, as it is in the original—*glorified joy*. In rejoicing with this joy, their minds were filled, as it were, with a glorious brightness, and their natures perfected. It was a prelibation of the joys of heaven, raising their minds to a degree of heavenly blessedness.

Hence the proposition, or doctrine, which I would raise from these words, is this,

TRUE RELIGION CHIEFLY CONSISTS IN HOLY AFFECTIONS.

We see that the apostle, in observing the operations and exercises of religion in the Christians to whom he wrote, singles out the *affections of love and joy*. These are the exercises of which he takes notice, as exhibiting the reality and purity of religion. Here I would

I. Show *what is intended by the affections*.

II. Observe some things which make it evident that *a great part of religion lies in the affections*.

1. It may be inquired WHAT THE AFFECTIONS OF THE MIND ARE.

I answer, they are *the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul*.

God has endowed the soul with two faculties; one is that by which it is capable of perception and speculation, and is called the *understanding*: the other is that by which it not merely discerns and judges, but is some way *inclined*; or, it is that faculty by which it views things, not as an indifferent, unaffected spectator, but either as liking, or disliking; approving, or disapproving. This faculty is called by different names. It is sometimes called the *inclination*; as it respects the actions which are determined and governed by it, it is called the *will*; and the mind, with regard to the exercises of this faculty, is often called the *heart*.

Sometimes the inclination is but just moved beyond a state of perfect indifference; at other times it is vigorously exercised: these lively and powerful exercises of the inclination are called the *affections*.

It should be remarked, also, that the will and the affections are not two distinct faculties; and that the

latter do not differ from the mere actings of the inclination and the will, but only as it respects the liveliness and vigor of the exercises.

It must be admitted, that language, in reference to this subject, is somewhat imperfect. In a certain sense, the affections do not differ at all from the inclination and the will: the will is not moved from a state of perfect indifference, but as it is affected. But still there are many acts of the inclination and the will, which are not in general called affections.

The affections and the passions are not unfrequently represented as being the same; and yet, in the more ordinary acceptation of the terms, there is, in some respects, a difference. The word affection appears to convey a more extensive idea than the term passion.

The affections are of two sorts; those by which the soul cleaves to, or seeks; and those by which it dislikes, or opposes. Of the former kind are love, desire, hope, joy, gratitude, complacence; of the latter kind are hatred, fear, anger, grief. There are some affections of a mixed nature; as pity, in which there is something of the former kind toward the person suffering, and something of the latter in reference to what he suffers. In zeal, there is warm approbation, as it respects one object; and vigorous opposition, as it respects another.

II. The second thing proposed, is to notice some circumstances which render it evident, that TRUE RELIGION, IN A GREAT MEASURE, CONSISTS IN THE AFFECTIONS.

1. What has been said of the *nature of the affections*, makes this evident, and is sufficient without adding any thing further upon the subject; for who will deny that true religion consists, in a great measure, in vigorous and lively actings of the inclination and will of the soul, or the fervent exercises of the heart?

That religion which God requires, and will accept, does not consist in weak and lifeless inclinations, raised but a little above a state of indifference. God, in his word, insists upon it that we should be in earnest, "fervent in spirit," Rom. 12 : 11, having our hearts vigorously engaged in religion: "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him; and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul." Deut. 10 : 12. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." chap. 6 : 4, 5. It is such a fervent, vigorous engagedness of the soul in religion, which is the fruit of regeneration, and which has the promise of everlasting life: "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." Deut. 30 : 6.

If we are not in earnest, and our wills and inclinations strongly exercised, we are nothing as to religion. The things of religion are so great, that there can be no suitableness in the exercises of our hearts, to their nature and importance, unless those exercises are lively and powerful. In nothing is vigor in the actings of our inclinations so requisite as in religion; and in nothing is lukewarmness so odious. True religion is always a powerful principle; and this power, in the first place, is exercised in the heart, the principal, and original seat of it. Hence true religion is called the power of godliness, in opposition to the external appearance, or the mere form of it: "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." 2 Tim.

3 : 5. The Spirit of God, in those who possess real religion, is a spirit of powerful, holy affection ; and therefore God is said to have given them a “ spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” 2 Tim. 1 : 7. And such, when they receive the Spirit of God, in his sanctifying and saving influences, are said to be “ baptized with the Holy Ghost, and with fire,” Matt. 3 : 11 ; in consequence of the power and fervor of those exercises which the Spirit of God excites in their hearts. Their hearts, when grace is in exercise, may be said to burn within them, like those of the disciples mentioned in Luke, 24 : 32.

Religion is frequently compared to those exercises in which the mind and strength are usually very much engaged and exercised ; such as running, wrestling, and fighting.

And though there are different degrees of grace, and some Christians are but babes in Christ, in whom the exercise of the inclination and will toward divine and heavenly things is comparatively weak ; yet every one who possesses the power of godliness in his soul, has his inclination and will exercised toward God and divine things, with such strength and vigor, that those holy exercises prevail in him above all carnal and natural affections ; for every true disciple of Christ loves him above father or mother, wife or children, brethren or sisters, houses or lands, yea, above his own life. From hence it follows, that wherever true religion exists, there are vigorous exercises of the inclination and will toward divine objects ; but agreeably to what was said before, the vigorous and lively exercises of the will, are in reality the affections of the soul.

2. The Author of human nature has not only communicated affections to men, but has made them very

much the *spring* of their actions. As the affections necessarily belong to human nature, so holy affections not only necessarily belong to true religion, but constitute a principal part of it. And as true religion is of a practical nature, and God has so constituted the human frame that the affections are the chief spring of men's actions, this also shows that true religion must consist very much in the affections.

Such is the nature of man, that he is quite inactive any farther than as he is influenced by some affection. The affections are the springs which set us to work in all the affairs of life, and stimulate us in all our pursuits, especially in all affairs pursued with vigor. Take away all love and hatred, all hope and fear, all zeal and affectionate desire, and the world would, in a great measure, be lifeless: there would be no such thing as activity amongst men—no earnest pursuit of any description. It is affection which engages the covetous, the ambitious, and the voluptuous in their various pursuits. The world continues from age to age in a perpetual commotion and agitation; but take away all affections, and the spring of all this activity would be broken, and the agitation itself would cease. And, as in worldly things, worldly affections are very much the spring of action; so in spiritual things, spiritual affections are also very much the spring of action. He who possesses doctrinal knowledge only, is never seriously and earnestly engaged in the business of religion.

3. Nothing is more manifest than that the things of religion take possession of the minds of men *no further than as they affect them*. There are many who often hear the word of God, and therein hear of those things which are infinitely important, and which most

intimately concern them ; but all that is heard seems to be wholly ineffectual, and to make no alteration in their disposition and behavior : the reason is, they are not *affected* with what they hear. There are many who often hear of the glorious perfections of God, particularly of his unspeakable love in Christ, of what Christ has done and suffered, and of what relates to another world—eternal misery, and everlasting felicity ; they also hear the immutable injunctions of the law, and the gracious warnings and invitations of the gospel ; and yet remain as they were before, without any sensible alteration either in heart or practice, because they are not *affected* with what they hear. There never was any considerable change wrought in the mind, or in the deportment of any individual, by any thing of a religious nature, which did not move his affections. Never was any one humbled, and brought to the throne of grace, by any thing he ever heard, or imagined, respecting his own unworthiness, and his exposure to the wrath of God, nor induced to flee for refuge to Christ, while his heart remained unaffected. There never was a saint recovered from a declining state in religion, without having his heart affected ; and, in short, there never was any thing considerable brought to pass in the heart or life of any man, by the things of religion, until the mind was deeply affected by those things.

4. The *Holy Scriptures* every where place religion very much in the affections : such as fear, hope, love, hatred, desire, joy, sorrow, gratitude, compassion, and zeal.

The Scriptures place much of religion in godly *fear* : so much that it is often spoken of as the character of those who are truly religious, that they tremble

at the word of God ; that they fear before him ; that their flesh trembles for fear of him ; that they are afraid of his judgments ; that his excellency makes them afraid ; that his dread falls upon them, &c. In Scripture the saints are called fearers of God, and are often distinguished by the term—*they that fear the Lord*. And as the fear of God is a great part of religion, true godliness in general is very often called by the name of “the fear of God :” every one knows this who knows any thing of the Bible.

Hope in God, and in the promises of his word, is also often spoken of, in the Scriptures, as a very considerable part of true religion. It is mentioned as one of the three great things of which religion consists. 1 Cor. 13 : 13. It is often mentioned as one of the characteristics of the saints: “Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God.” Psalm 146 : 5. “Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.” Jer. 17 : 7. “Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.” Psalm 31 : 24. In scripture, religious fear is sometimes united with hope in descriptions of the saints: “Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy.” Psalm 33 : 18. “The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.” Psalm 147 : 11. Hope is so great a part of religion, that the Apostle says, “we are saved by hope.” Rom. 8 : 24. It is spoken of as the helmet of the Christian soldier: “And for an helmet, the hope of salvation;” (1 Thess 5 : 8.) and as the sure and stedfast anchor of the soul, which preserves it from being cast away by the storms of this evil world: “Which hope we have as an

anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil." Heb. 6 : 19. It is mentioned as an important benefit received from the resurrection of Christ : "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," who, "according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." 1 Pet. 1 : 3.

The Scriptures place religion very much in the affection of *love* : in love to God, to the Lord Jesus Christ, to the people of God, and to mankind in general. The texts in which this is manifest, both in the Old and New Testament, are innumerable. But more of this afterward.

The contrary affection of *hatred* also, as having sin for its object, is spoken of in scripture as no inconsiderable part of religion. It is mentioned as that by which true religion may be known and distinguished : "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil." Prov. 8 : 13. And accordingly the saints are called upon to give evidence of their sincerity by this affection : "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." Psalm 97 : 10. The Psalmist often mentions this affection as an evidence of *his* sincerity : "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart : I will set no wicked thing before my eyes ; I hate the work of them that turn aside." Psalm 101 : 2, 3. "I hate every false way." Psalm 119 : 104 and 128. "Do I not hate them, O Lord, that hate thee?" Psalm 139 : 21.

Holy *desire* after God and holiness is likewise often mentioned in Scripture as an important part of true religion : "The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee." Isaiah, 26 : 8. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek

after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." Psalm 27 : 4. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God ; when shall I come and appear before God ?" Psalm 42 : 1, 2. "My soul thirsteth for thee ; my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is ; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in thy sanctuary." Psalm 63 : 1, 2. "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts ! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord ; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." Psalm 84 : 1, 2. "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times." Psalm 119 : 20. See also, Psalm 73 : 25, and 143 : 6, 7, and 130 : 6. Cant. 3 : 1, 2. Such a holy desire, or thirst of soul, is mentioned in the beginning of the sermon of Christ on the mount, as one of those things which render, or denote a man truly blessed : "Blessed are they" who "do hunger and thirst after righteousness ; for they shall be filled." Matt. 5 : 6. To this holy thirst is promised the participation of the blessings of eternal life : "I will give unto him that is athirst, of the fountain of the water of life freely." Rev. 21 : 6.

The Scriptures speak of holy *joy* as constituting a great part of true religion. So it is represented in the text. And as an important part of religion it is often made the subject of earnest exhortation. "Delight thyself in the Lord ; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." Psalm 37 : 4. "Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous." Psalm 97 : 12. "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous." Psalm 33 : 1. "Rejoice and be ex-

ceeding glad." Matt. 5 : 12. "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." Phil. 3 : 1. "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, rejoice." Phil. 4 : 4. "Rejoice evermore." 1 Thess. 5 : 16. "Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King." Psalm 149 : 2.

This holy joy is mentioned among the principal fruits of the Spirit of grace: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy," &c. Gal. 5 : 22. The Psalmist mentions this holy joy as an evidence of his sincerity: "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches." Psalm 119 : 14.

Religious *sorrow, mourning, and brokenness of heart*, are also frequently spoken of as forming a great part of religion. They are mentioned as distinguishing qualities of the true saints, and as constituting a principal part of their character: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Matt. 5 : 4. "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." Psalm 34 : 18. "The Lord hath anointed me to bind up the broken-hearted—to comfort all that mourn." Isaiah, 61 : 1, 2. This godly sorrow, or brokenness of heart, is often spoken of, not only as forming a distinguishing feature in the character of the saints, but as that in them which is peculiarly acceptable and pleasing to God: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Psalm 51 : 17. "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place—with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Isaiah, 57 : 15. "To this man will I look, even

to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit." Isa. 66 : 2.

Another affection often mentioned, as that, in the exercise of which much of true religion consists, is *gratitude*; especially as exercised in thankfulness and praise to God. This being so frequently spoken of in the book of Psalms, and in other parts of Scripture, I need not quote, or refer to particular texts.

Again, the Holy Scriptures frequently speak of *compassion* or *mercy*, as a great and essential part of true religion; insomuch, that, in the sacred writings, good men are denominated from thence. A merciful and a good man are synonymous terms: "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away from the evil to come." And the Scriptures select this quality, as that by which, in a peculiar manner, a righteous man is distinguished: "The righteous showeth mercy, and giveth." Psalm 37 : 21; and ver. 26. "He is ever merciful and lendeth." "He that honoreth his Maker, hath mercy on the poor." Prov. 14 : 31. "Put" ye "on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies," &c. Col. 3 : 12. This is one of those distinguishing marks by which our Savior describes those who are truly blessed: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Matt. 5 : 7. And this is also spoken of as one of the weightier matters of the law: "Wo unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith." Matt. 23 : 23. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Micah, 6 : 8. "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice." Hosea, 6 : 6. This seems,

from his repeatedly citing it, to have been a text much delighted in by our Savior. See Matt. 9 : 13, and 12 : 7.

Zeal is also spoken of as a very essential part of true religion. The production of zeal in his followers, is mentioned as what Christ had in view in giving himself for our redemption: "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Tit. 2 : 14. And this is mentioned as something of great importance, wanting in the lukewarm Laodiceans. Rev. 3 : 15, 16, 19.

5. The Scriptures represent religion as being summarily comprehended in *love*, the chief of the affections, and the fountain of all the rest.

So our blessed Savior represents the subject, in answer to the lawyer who asked him which was the great commandment of the law. "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." The last sentence signifies as much, as that these two commandments comprehend all the duty prescribed, and the religion taught in the law and the prophets. The Apostle Paul repeatedly makes the same representation: "He that loveth another, hath fulfilled the law." Rom. 13 : 8. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." Ver. 10. "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Gal. 5 : 14. "Now the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart," &c. 1 Tim. 1 : 5. The same Apostle speaks of love as the most important thing in religion, as the vitals and soul

of it; without which the greatest knowledge and gifts, the most brilliant profession, and every thing else belonging to religion, are worthless. He represents it as the fountain from whence proceeds all that is good. See 1 Cor. : 13. The word there rendered *charity* in our translation, is *αγάπη*, the proper English of which is, *love*.

The love thus spoken of, includes the whole of a sincerely benevolent disposition of soul toward God and man; and which, when in sensible and vigorous exercise, becomes affection: it is indeed nothing but affectionate love. And surely it is such a vigorous and fervent love which Christ mentions when he speaks of loving God with all our hearts, with all our souls, and with all our minds, and our neighbor as ourselves, as the sum of all that was taught and prescribed in the law and the prophets.

Indeed it cannot be supposed, that when this affection is represented as the sum of all religion, the act exclusive of the habit is meant; or that the exercise of the understanding, which is implied in all reasonable affection, is excluded. But it is undoubtedly true, that the essence of all true religion is holy love; and that in this holy affection, in that light which is the foundation of it, and in those things which are the fruits of it, consists the whole of religion.

From hence it clearly appears, that a great part of true religion lies in the affections; for love is not only one of the affections, but the chief and fountain of all the rest. From love arises hatred of those things which are contrary to what we love, or which oppose and thwart us in those things in which we delight. From the various exercises of love and hatred, according to the circumstances of the object of these affections, as

present or absent, certain or uncertain, probable or improbable, arise all those other affections of desire, hope, fear, joy, grief, gratitude, anger, &c. From a vigorous, affectionate, and fervent love to God, necessarily arise other religious affections: a dread of the displeasure of God, gratitude to him for his goodness, complacency and joy in him when he is sensibly present, grief and anxiety when he appears to be absent, &c. And in like manner, from a fervent love to men, arise all other virtuous affections toward them.

6. The religion of the most *eminent saints* of whom we read in the Scriptures, consisted much in holy affections.

I shall take particular notice of three eminent saints, who, in the writings which they have left us, have expressed their sentiments on this subject, and so described their own religion, and the manner of their intercourse with God.

The first of whom I shall take notice, is *David*; who has given us a lively portrait of *his* religion in the book of Psalms. Those divine songs are the expressions of devout and holy affections; such as humble, fervent love to God, admiration of his glorious perfections and wonderful works, earnest desire of soul after him, unfeigned gratitude to him for his great goodness, a holy exultation and triumph of soul in his favor, sufficiency, and faithfulness. They express also his love to the saints, the excellent of the earth; his delight in the word and ordinances of God; his grief for his own, and for the sins of others; and his fervent zeal in opposing the enemies of God, and the enemies of his church. And these expressions of holy affection, of which the Psalms of David are every where full, are the more to our present purpose, as they are not only the expres-

sions of the religion of so eminent a saint; but were, by the direction of the Holy Spirit, penned for the use of the church of God in its public worship, purposely to express the religion of the saints in all ages of the world. It is likewise to be observed, that David, in the book of Psalms, speaks not as a private person, but as the Psalmist of Israel, as the subordinate head of the church of God, and leader in her worship and praises. In many of the Psalms he speaks in the name of Christ; and in many others, in the name of the church.

The second eminent saint of whom I shall take notice, is the *Apostle Paul*, who was, in many respects, the chief of the ministers of the New Testament; above all others, a chosen vessel unto Christ, to bear his name before the Gentiles; made the chief instrument of establishing the Christian church in the world, and of distinctly revealing the glorious mysteries of the Gospel for the instruction of his people in all future ages. By what is said of him in the Scriptures, he appears to have been full of affection; and it is manifest, that the religion he expresses in his epistles consists very much in holy affections. It appears that he was actuated by a most ardent love to his glorious Lord, esteeming all things as loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. He represents himself as overpowered by this holy affection; and, as it were, compelled by it to go forward in his service, through all difficulties and sufferings. See 2 Cor. 5 : 14, 15. His epistles are full of expressions of ardent affections toward the people of God. He speaks of his *dear* love to them, (2 Cor. 22 : 19; Phil. 4 : 1; 2 Tim. 1 : 2;) of his *abundant* love, (2 Cor. 2 : 4;) and of his affectionate and *tender* love, such as a nurse possesses toward her children. 1 Thess. 2 : 7, 8. He speaks of his bowels of love

(Phil. 1 : 8; Phil. 5 : 12, 20;) of his *earnest* care for others, (2 Cor. 8 : 16;) of his *bowels* of pity or *mercy* toward them, (Phil. 2 : 1,) and of his concern for them even to *anguish* of heart. 2 Cor. 2 : 4. He speaks of the *great conflict* of his soul for them, (Col. 2 : 1,) of *great* and *continual grief* in his heart from compassion to the Jews, (Rom. 9 : 2,) and of his mouth being opened, and his *heart enlarged* toward the Christians. 2 Cor. 6 : 11. He often speaks of his *affectionate* and *longing* desires. 1 Thess. 2 : 8; Rom. 1 : 11; Phil. 1 : 8, and 4 : 1; 2 Tim. 1 : 4. He very often, in his epistles, expresses the affection of joy. 2 Cor. 1 : 12, and 7 : 7, 9, 16; Phil. 1 : 4; 2 : 1, 2, and 3 : 3; Col. 1 : 2, 4; 1 Thess. 3 : 9. He speaks of his rejoicing with *great joy*, (Phil. 4 : 10, and 1 : 7,) of his joying and rejoicing, (Phil. 2 : 1, 7,) of his rejoicing *exceedingly*, (2 Cor. 7 : 13,) of his being *filled* with comfort, and being *exceedingly* joyful. 2 Cor. 7 : 4. He speaks of himself as *always* triumphing, or rejoicing, (2 Cor. 2 : 14,) and of his *glorying* in tribulation. 2 Thess. 1 : 4; and Rom. 5 : 3. He also expresses the affection of hope : in Phil. 1 : 20, he speaks of his *earnest* expectation and of his *hope*. He likewise expresses the affection of godly jealousy. 2 Cor. 11 : 2, 3. And it appears from his whole history, after his conversion, that the affection of zeal, as having the cause of his Master and the interest and prosperity of the church for its object, was mighty in him, continually urging him to those great and arduous labors in which he was engaged, in instructing, exhorting, warning, and reproofing others; contending with those powerful and numerous enemies which continually opposed him; wrestling with principalities and powers, not fighting as one who beats the air; running the race set before him, con-

tinually pressing forward through a variety of difficulties and sufferings. And how full of affection he was, appears further from his being so full of tears: in 2 Cor. 2 : 4, and Acts, 20 : 19, he speaks of his *many* tears; and in verse 31, of his tears which he shed *night and day*.

The other eminent saint whom I shall mention, is the *Apostle John*, the beloved disciple, who was the dearest to his Master, and by him admitted to the greatest privileges of any of the twelve. He was not only one of the three who were allowed to be present with him on the mount at his transfiguration, at the raising of the daughter of **Jairus**, and whom he took with him when he was in his agony, but was favored above them all in being permitted to lean on his Master's bosom at his last supper, and being chosen by him as the person to whom he would reveal his wonderful dispensations toward his church to the end of time. He was selected to shut up the canon of the Scriptures, being preserved much longer than any of the other apostles.

It is evident, from his writings, that he was a person remarkably full of affection. His addresses to those to whom he wrote are inexpressibly tender and pathetic, breathing nothing but the most fervent love. The proofs of this cannot be given without disadvantage, unless we should transcribe the whole of his writings.

7. He whom God sent into the world to be the light of the world, and the perfect example of true religion and virtue, even the *Lord Jesus Christ*, was remarkably affectionate. He presented the most striking instance of the ardency, vigor, and strength of love, both to God and to man, that ever existed. It was this

principle which obtained the victory in that mighty struggle and conflict of his affections, when he "prayed more earnestly, and offered up strong crying and tears." Heb. 5 : 7. Such was the power of his holy love that it was stronger than death, and in the mighty conflict overcame those powerful exercises of fear and grief, when he was sore amazed, and his soul was "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." He also appears to have been full of affection during the whole of his life. We read of his great zeal, fulfilling what is written in the 69th Psalm : "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." John, 2 : 17. We read of his grief for the sins of men : "He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." Mark, 3 : 5. See also Luke, 19 : 41. We often read of the affection of pity, or compassion in Christ, (Matt. 15 : 32 ; Luke, 7 : 13 ;) and of his being moved by compassion, (Matt. 9 : 36 ; 14 : 14 ; Mark, 6 : 34.) How tenderly affectionate was he when Mary and Martha, mourning for their brother, came to him with their complaints and their tears ! He was affected by their grief, and wept with them, though he knew that their sorrow would soon be turned into joy. See John, 11. And how ineffably affectionate was the last discourse which Jesus had with his eleven disciples the evening before he was crucified, when he informed them that he was going away, and foretold the great difficulties and sufferings they would meet with in the world after he was gone ; when he comforted and counselled them as his dear children, and bequeathed to them his Holy Spirit. See the 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, and 17th chapters of John. Of all the discourses ever penned, or uttered, this was the most tender and affectionate.

8. The *religion of heaven* consists very much in holy affections.

In order to learn the true nature of any thing, we should go where the subject of our inquiry is to be found in its greatest purity and perfection. If we would acquaint ourselves with the nature of gold, we must view it not in the ore, but when refined. If we would ascertain the nature of true religion, we must go where true religion is possessed without any defect or mixture.

There is, doubtless, true religion in heaven, and true religion in its utmost purity and perfection. But according to the Scripture representation, the religion of a future state consists chiefly in holy love and joy, and the expression of these in the most fervent and exalted praises. So that the religion of the saints in heaven consists in the same things as the religion of the saints on earth—joy unspeakable and full of glory.

The love and joy of the saints on earth constitute the dawning of the light, life, and blessedness of heaven; they are the same in nature, though not in degree and circumstances. This is evident from many passages of Scripture. See Prov. 4 : 18. John, 4 : 14 ; 6 : 40, 47, 50, 54, 58. 1 John, 3 : 15. 1 Cor. 13 : 8–12. Hence, therefore, the religion of heaven, consisting chiefly of holy love and joy, consists very much in affection; and therefore, undoubtedly, true religion consists very much in affection.

9. It appears, from the nature and design of the *ordinances and duties* which God has appointed as means and expressions of true religion, that true religion lies very much in the affections.

For instance: the duty of prayer. It is evident that we do not, in this duty, declare our wants and desires, in order to inform God, or to incline his heart to show mercy; but suitably to affect our own hearts, and so

to prepare ourselves for the reception of the blessings we ask. Such external behavior in the worship of God, as custom has made significant of humility and reverence, can be of no further use than as it has some tendency to affect our own hearts, or the hearts of others.

And the duty of singing praises seems to be appointed wholly to excite and express religious affections. No reason can be assigned why we should express ourselves to God in verse rather than in prose, and do it with music; but only, that such is our nature and frame, that these things have a tendency to move the affections.

The same may be said, also, of the nature and design of those sacraments which God has appointed. Our heavenly Father, considering our frame, has not only appointed that we should be told of the great things of the gospel, and by his word be instructed in reference to the redemption of Christ; but also that they should be exhibited to our view, in sensible representations in the sacraments, in order the more deeply to affect us.

One of the main ends for which God has ordained that his word, delivered in the Holy Scriptures, should be explained and applied in preaching, was evidently that divine things might be thus impressed upon the affections of men. It is, therefore, not sufficient for us to have good commentaries and expositions on the Scriptures, and other valuable books of divinity; because, although these may tend, as well as preaching, to give us a doctrinal and speculative knowledge of the things of religion, yet they have not an equal tendency to impress them on our affections. God has appointed a particular and lively application of his word, in the preaching of it, as fit means to affect sin-

ners with the importance of the things of religion, and to stir up the minds of the saints, by often bringing these things to their remembrance. Preaching is particularly intended to promote the two affections mentioned in the text—love and joy: “And he” (Christ) “gave some apostles, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers—for the edifying of the body of Christ—in love.” Eph. 4 : 11, 12, 16. The apostle instructing Timothy concerning the work of the ministry, informs him, that the great end of that word which a minister is to preach, is “love, or charity.” 1 Tim. 1 : 3, 4, 5. Another affection for the promotion of which God has appointed preaching, is joy; and therefore ministers are called helpers of our joy. 2 Cor. 1 : 24.

10. It is evident that true religion, or holiness, lies very much in the affections, because the Scriptures place *sin* very much in *hardness of heart*. It was hardness of heart which excited grief and displeasure in Christ toward the Jews: “He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.” Mark, 3 : 5. The reason given why the house of Israel would not obey God, was, that they were hard-hearted. Ezek. 3 : 7. The wickedness of that perverse, rebellious generation, in the wilderness, is ascribed to the same cause. Psalm 95 : 7–10. This is spoken of as what prevented Zedekiah’s turning to the Lord: “He hardened his heart.” 2 Chron. 36 : 13. The rejecting of Christ, and the opposing of Christianity, are ascribed to this principle, Acts, 19 : 9. When men are left to the power of their depravity and sin, they are mentioned as having their hearts hardened. Rom. 9 : 18. The apostle speaks of an evil heart that departs from the living God, and a hard

heart, as the same thing. Heb. 3 : 8, 12, 13. And that great work of God, conversion, which consists in delivering a person from the power of sin, is often mentioned as the taking away of the heart of stone, and as the giving of a heart of flesh. See Ezek. 11 : 19, and 36 : 26.

Now, by a hard heart, is undoubtedly meant, a perverse, unaffected heart ; a heart not easily moved by virtuous affections, but, like a stone, insensible and difficult to be impressed. Hence the hard heart is called a stony heart, and is opposed to a heart of flesh. We read, in Scripture, of a hard heart, and a tender heart ; and doubtless we are to understand these as contrary to each other. But what is a tender heart, but a heart easily affected with what ought to affect it ? God commends Josiah, because his heart was tender ; and it is evident from what are mentioned as expressions and proofs of this state of mind, that by his heart being tender, is meant its being easily moved by religious and pious affection : “ Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord ; hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me, I also have heard thee, saith the Lord.” 2 Kings, 22 : 19.

It is very evident, that in some texts, by hardness of heart, is meant a heart void of affection. Of the ostrich it is said, “ She hardeneth her heart against her young ones, as though they were not hers.” Job, 39 : 16. So a person unaffected in time of danger, is said to harden his heart. Prov. 28 : 14.

Now, since it is evident that by a hard heart, in Scripture, is meant a heart destitute of pious affections ; and since also the Scriptures so frequently denominate our sin and depravity by the terms “ hardness of heart,” it is evident that grace and holiness

must, in a great measure, consist in our being easily susceptible of such affections. Divines are generally agreed, that sin radically and fundamentally consists in what is negative or privative—in a privation, or want of holiness. And therefore, undoubtedly, if sin very much consists in hardness of heart, and so in the want of pious affections, holiness must consist very much in those pious affections.

I am far from supposing that *all* affections show a tenderness of heart: hatred, anger, &c. may prevail in the hardest heart. Yet, it is evident, that hardness of heart, and tenderness of heart, relate to the affections, and denote a mind susceptible, or insusceptible, of certain emotions.

Upon the whole, I think it abundantly evident, that true religion consists very much in the affections. I do not, however, think, that religion in the hearts of the truly godly, is ever *in exact proportion* to the degree of affection and present emotion of the mind; for undoubtedly there is much affection in real saints which is not spiritual. Their religious affections are often mixed; *all* is not from grace, but *much* from nature; and though the affections have not their seat in the body, yet the constitution of the body may very much contribute to the present emotion of the mind. The degree of religion is rather to be judged of by the fixedness and strength of the habit, than by the degree of the present exercise; and the strength of that habit is not always in proportion to the outward effects and manifestations, or to the hurry, vehemence, and sudden changes of the course of the thoughts. But yet it is evident, that religion consists so much in the affections, that without holy affection there is no religion. No light in the understanding is good, which

does not produce holy affection in the heart ; no habit of mind is good which has no such exercise ; and no external fruit is good which does not proceed from this principle.

Having thus considered the evidence of the proposition laid down, I proceed to SOME INFERENCES.

1. We may hence learn how much those persons err who wish to *discard* all religious affections.

There seems to be too much of a disposition of this kind prevailing at this time. Because many in the late extraordinary season who appeared to have great religious affections, did not manifest a right temper of mind, and in the heat of their zeal ran into many errors, and because the high affections of some appear to have entirely subsided, and others, who were evidently filled with joy and zeal for a while, seem to have returned like a dog to his vomit ; hence religious affections in general are grown out of credit with many persons, as though true religion did not at all consist in them. Thus we easily run from one extreme to another. A little while ago we were disposed to regard all high affections about religion as eminent exercises of true grace, without inquiring into the nature and source of those affections, and the manner in which they arose. If persons did but appear to be very much moved and raised, so as to be full of religious talk, and expressed themselves with great warmth and earnestness, it was too much the custom, without further examination, to conclude that such persons were full of the Spirit of God, and enjoyed eminent experience of his gracious influence. But of late, instead of admiring all religious affections, we have been much more disposed to reject and discard all, without

distinction. Herein appears the subtlety of Satan. While he saw that religious affections were much thought of, and that people in general were ill informed upon this subject, he knew that he could best accomplish his ends by sowing tares amongst the wheat, and mingling false affections with the work of the Spirit of God. He saw that this was a likely way to ruin many souls, and to entangle the saints in a perplexing wilderness, and in a short time to bring all religion into disrepute. But now, when the consequences of these false affections appear, and it has become very apparent that some of those emotions which made a fine show, and were by many persons greatly admired, were in reality nothing, the devil sees it to be his advantage to go another way to work, and to endeavor, to the utmost of his power, to propagate and establish a persuasion, that all affections and emotions of the mind, with respect to religion, are to be disregarded, or rather opposed, as having a pernicious tendency. This he knows is the likeliest way to reduce all religion to a mere lifeless formality, and effectually to banish the power of godliness and every thing that is truly gracious. For although, in true religion, there is something more than affection, yet it consists so much in the affections, that there can be no true religion without them. He who has no religious affection is in a state of spiritual death, wholly destitute of the powerful, quickening, saving influences of the Spirit of God upon his heart. As there is no true religion where there is nothing else but affection, so there is no true religion where there is no religious affection. As, on the one hand, there must be light in the understanding, as well as warmth in the affections, for where there is heat without light there can be

nothing divine or heavenly; so, on the other hand, where there is a kind of light in the understanding, without warmth in the affections—a head stored with notions and speculations, with a cold, unaffected heart—there can be nothing divine: that knowledge is not true spiritual knowledge of divine things. If the things of religion are rightly understood, they *will affect the heart*. The reason why men are not affected by such infinitely great, important, and glorious things, as they often hear and read of in the word of God, is undoubtedly because they are spiritually blind; if they were not so, it would be impossible, and utterly inconsistent with the principles of human nature, that their hearts would be otherwise than very powerfully impressed.

Slighting all religious affections, is the way to harden the hearts of men; to encourage them in their perverseness; to keep them in a state of spiritual death, and to bring them at last to death eternal.

2. If it is true that religion lies very much in the affections, we may infer, that *such scriptural means are to be desired* as have a tendency to move the affections. Such a manner of preaching and administering the ordinances, such a mode of worshipping God in prayer, and singing praises, are much to be desired, as have a tendency deeply to affect the hearts of those who attend upon the means of grace.

There may, indeed, be such means adopted as have a powerful tendency to stir up the passions of weak and ignorant persons, which in reality are not adapted to benefit their souls; for though they may have a tendency to excite affections, they have little or none to excite gracious ones, or any affections tending to grace. But, undoubtedly, if divine things are treated, in the public exercises of religion, according to their

nature, and exhibited in such a manner as tends to convey just apprehensions, and a right judgment of them, the more they have a tendency to move the affections the better.

3. If true religion lies very much in the affections, we may learn what abundant cause we have to be ashamed and confounded before God, that we are *no more affected* by the great and momentous concerns of religion. It appears, from what has been said, that this arises from our having so little of true religion.

God has given to mankind affections for the same purpose that he has given all the faculties and principles of the human soul, that they might be subservient to the great business for which man was created—the business of religion; and yet how common is it among mankind, to have their affections much more exercised and engaged in other matters than in religion! As to those things which concern their worldly interests, the desires of men are eager, and their love warm and affectionate. In reference to these objects they are much impressed, and very deeply concerned. They are much affected with grief at worldly losses, and much elated with joy at worldly prosperity. But how insensible and unmoved are most men, about the great things of another world! How languid are their affections as to these things! How insensibly they can sit and hear of the infinite love of God in giving his dear Son to be offered up a sacrifice for the sins of men; and of the unparalleled love of the innocent and holy Lamb of God, manifested in his dying agonies, his bloody sweat, his bitter cries and bleeding heart. They can hear that all this was done for his enemies, to redeem them from deserved, eternal burnings, and to bring them to unspeakable and everlasting joys, and

yet be cold, insensible, and regardless ! Where are the exercises of our affections proper, if not here ? what is there that more requires them ? and what can be a fitter occasion of their vigorous and lively exercise ? Can any thing of greater importance be presented to our view ? any thing more wonderful ? or any thing more intimately connected with our interest ? Can we suppose that the infinitely wise Creator implanted such principles in the human nature as the affections, to be of essential use to us, and to be exercised on certain objects, but to be totally inactive in reference to those things which are of the very first importance ?

If we ought ever to exercise our affections at all, and if the Creator has not unwisely constituted the nature of man, in making these principles a part of it, they ought to be exercised about those objects which are most worthy of them. But is there any thing which Christians can find, so worthy of their admiration and love, their desires and hopes, their zeal and their joy, as those things which are exhibited in the Gospel of Jesus Christ ? The glory of the blessed JEHOVAH is there presented to view in the most affecting light, displaying all its lustre in the face of an incarnate and infinitely compassionate Redeemer. All the virtues of the Lamb of God, his humility, his patience, his meekness, his submission, his obedience, his love, and his compassion, are presented to our contemplation in a manner the most adapted to move our affections. There also the hateful nature of sin, together with the inflexible justice of God, which will by no means allow iniquity to go unpunished, are exhibited in the clearest and most affecting light. God has so disposed all things, in the glorious dispensation of the Gospel, as most powerfully to impress the affections. What

abundant cause have we, therefore, to be humbled in the dust, that we are no more affected with the infinitely momentous concerns of religion!

PART SECOND.

ON THOSE THINGS WHICH AFFORD NO DECISIVE EVIDENCE,
EITHER THAT OUR AFFECTIONS ARE TRULY GRACIOUS,
OR THAT THEY ARE NOT.

If any one, on the reading of what has been already said, is disposed to acquit himself by saying, "I am not one of those who have no religious affections; I am often powerfully moved by the consideration of the important things of religion:" let him not conclude, from this circumstance, that his affections are truly gracious; for though, as already observed, we ought not to reject and condemn all emotions of the mind arising from a view of divine things, as though true religion did not at all consist in affection; so, on the other hand, we ought not to approve of all, as though every one who was affected by the things of religion had true grace, and was the subject of the saving influences of the Spirit of God. We should endeavor to discriminate between true and false religious affections. In order that I may assist in that important work, I will first mention some things which are no proofs, either that affections are such as true religion consists in, or that they are not, that I may guard

against judging of affections by false signs ; and then, in a succeeding part,

Notice some things wherein spiritual and gracious affections differ from those which are not so, and by which they may be distinguished.

I am now to notice some things which ARE NO PROOFS THAT AFFECTIONS ARE GRACIOUS, OR THAT THEY ARE NOT.

1. That affections concerning religious things are *raised very high*, is no proof either that those affections are gracious, or that they are not.

Some persons are disposed to condemn all high religious affections. If professors appear to have their affections raised, with respect to religion, to an extraordinary height, such persons are prejudiced against them, and, without further inquiry, conclude that they are deluded. But if true religion lies very much in the affections, then it follows, that where there is much true religion, there will be much religious affection : if true religion, in the hearts of men, is raised to a great height, holy affections will also be raised to a great height.

Love is an affection ; but will any Christian say, that we ought not to love God, and Jesus Christ, in a high degree ? Will any one venture to affirm, that we ought not to hate sin with a perfect hatred ? that we ought not to exercise a high degree of gratitude to God for the mercies we receive at his hands ? or that we ought not to possess very strong desires after holiness ? Is there any one who will profess that his affections in religion are elevated enough ; and will say, “ I have no cause to be humbled, that I am no more affected by the things of religion than I am : I have no reason to be ashamed, that I have no greater exercises of love to God, and sorrow for sin, and gratitude for the mercies which I have received ? ” Will any individual bless

God that he is affected enough by what he has read and heard of the wonderful love of God to rebels, in giving his Son to die for them, and of the dying love of Christ? or will any one pray that he may not be affected by these things in a higher degree, because high religious affections are improper, enthusiastic, and ruinous to true religion?

Our text very evidently refers to high affections, when it speaks of "rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Here the strongest expressions are made use of which language can possibly furnish. The Scriptures very often enjoin high affections. Thus in the first commandment of the law, there is an accumulation of expressions, as though there were not words adequate to express the degree in which we ought to love God: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." Luke, 10 : 27. The saints are called upon to exercise a high degree of joy: "Rejoice," says Jesus Christ to his disciples, "and be exceeding glad." Matt. 5 : 12. "Let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God; yea, let them exceedingly rejoice." Psalm 68 : 3. In the book of Psalms the saints are often called upon to shout for joy; and in Luke, 6 : 23; to leap for joy. They are often exhorted to exercise a high degree of gratitude; to praise God with all their hearts.

We find the most eminent saints mentioned in Scripture often professing high affections. Thus the Psalmist speaks of his love, as if it were unspeakable: "O how I love thy law!" Psalm 119 : 97. He also expresses a high degree of hatred of sin: "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with

a perfect hatred." Psalm 139 : 21, 22. He also professes a high degree of sorrow for sin, as a burden too heavy for him. He likewise expresses a great degree of spiritual desire in many of the strongest terms which can be conceived of. He speaks of his longing, of his thirsting as a land where there is no water, of his soul breaking for the longing it hath, &c. He also mentions the exercise of great and extreme grief for the sins of others : " Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law." Psalm 119 : 136. " Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law." Verse 53. He expresses a high degree of joy : " The king shall joy in thy strength, and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice." Psalm 21 : 1. " My lips shall greatly rejoice, when I sing unto thee." Psalm 71 : 23. " Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live ; I will lift up my hands in thy name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness ; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips, when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice." Psalm 63 : 3—7.

The Apostle Paul expresses very high affections. He mentions the exercises of pity and concern for the good of others, even to anguish of heart—a fervent love—an ardent desire—an exalted joy. He speaks of the exultation and triumphs of his soul, his earnest expectation, his abundant tears, the travail of his soul, his godly jealousy, and his fervent zeal. John the Baptist expresses great joy. John, 3 : 39. Those blessed women who anointed the body of Jesus, are represented as exercising a very high degree of religious affection

at the resurrection of Christ: "And they departed—from the sepulchre, with fear and great joy." Matt. 28 : 8.

It is often foretold that the church of God, at some future period of the world, shall exceedingly rejoice: "They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance; in thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted." Psalm 89 : 15, 16. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee," &c. Zech. 9 : 9. As high degrees of joy are the genuine fruits of the Gospel of Christ, the angel calls this Gospel, good tidings of great joy, that should be to all people.

The saints and angels in heaven, who possess religion in its highest perfection, are exceedingly affected with what they behold and contemplate of the perfections of God, and of his work. They are all as a pure flame of fire in the warmth of their love, the elevation of their joy, and the ardency of their gratitude. Their praises are represented as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder. Now the only reason why their affections are so much higher than those of the saints on earth, is, that they see the things by which they are affected more according to their real nature and importance. Hence it is that their affections are more conformed to the nature of those things. If, therefore, religious affections, in the present state, are of the same nature with those of the saints in heaven, the nearer they are to theirs in degree, the better.

From these things it evidently appears, that if affections concerning religious things, are raised to a very great height, it is no certain proof that they are not

such as have in them the nature of true religion. Those persons, therefore, greatly err, who condemn others as enthusiasts, merely because their affections are very high.

On the other hand, their being very high, *is no certain proof that they are* of a spiritual and gracious nature. It is manifest from the Scriptures, that there are very high affections respecting the things of religion, which are not spiritual and saving. The Apostle Paul speaks of affections in the Galatians, which had been exceedingly elevated, but which he feared were in vain, and had totally subsided: "Where is the blessedness ye spake of; for I bear you record, that if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me." Gal. 4 : 15. And in the 11th verse he tells them that he was afraid of them, lest he had bestowed upon them labor in vain. The children of Israel were greatly affected by the mercy of God, when they saw how wonderfully he had delivered them at the Red Sea, and sang his praises, though they afterward soon forgot his works. So again, they were greatly affected at Mount Sinai, when they saw the marvellous manifestations which God made of himself there; and when he proposed his holy covenant to them, they with great forwardness replied, "All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and be obedient." But how soon were they turned aside after other gods! So great numbers who were affected by the raising of Lazarus from the dead, had their passions excited to a very high degree, and when Christ, immediately after entered into Jerusalem, they exceedingly magnified him. As though the ground was not good enough for even the ass which he rode to walk upon, they cut down branches of palm trees, and strewed them in the

way, and cried with loud voices, "Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, hosanna in the highest." There was a vast multitude crying Hosanna, so that it gave occasion to the Pharisees to say, "Behold, the world is gone after him." John, 12 : 19. But Christ, at that time, had but few true disciples; and all this was at an end when he stood bound, having a mock robe on, and a crown of thorns; when he was derided, spit upon, scourged, condemned, and executed. Indeed, there was a loud outcry respecting him among the multitude then, as well as before; but of a very different kind: it was not "Hosanna, hosanna," but "Crucify him, crucify him."

It is the general opinion of orthodox divines, that there may be very high affections concerning divine things, which have nothing in them of the nature of true religion.

II. That these affections produce *strong effects upon the body*, is no proof either that they are truly gracious, or that they are not.

All affections have in some respects, or degree, an effect on the body. Such is our nature, and such are the laws of union between the soul and the body, that the mind can have no lively or vigorous exercise without producing some effect upon the body. And if all emotions of the mind have some effect on the body, we may conclude that the greater those emotions are, the greater will be their effects on the animal frame. And since there are great affections, both common and spiritual, it is not to be wondered at, that such great effects should arise from both these kinds of affection; and consequently, these effects are no proof that the affections from which they arise are of one kind or the other.

Great effects on the body certainly are no sure evidence that affections are spiritual, for such are very often known to arise from great affections about temporal things, and when religion is no way concerned. And if great affections about secular things have these effects, I know not by what rule we should determine that high affections about religious things, which arise in like manner from nature, cannot have the same effects.

Nor, on the other hand, do I know of any rule by which we may determine, that gracious and holy affections, when raised as high as any natural affections, and possessing equally strong and vigorous exercises, cannot produce a great effect on the body. I know not why a view of the glory of God should not cause the body to faint, as well as a view of the glory of Solomon. There is certainly great power in spiritual affections. We read of the power which worketh in Christians; of the Spirit of God being in them as the spirit of power; of the effectual working of his power in them; and of the working of the mighty power of God in them. Eph. 3 : 7; 2 Tim. 1 : 7; Eph. 3 : 20; Eph. 1 : 19. But the nature of man is represented in Scripture as exceedingly weak; and particularly with regard to great spiritual exercises. Matt. 26 : 41; 1 Cor. 15 : 43 and 50. The passage prefixed to this treatise speaks of "joy unspeakable and full of glory." And who, that considers the nature of man and the nature of the affections, can reasonably doubt that such indescribable and glorious joys may be too great for the human frame, so as considerably to overpower it? It is evident from Scripture, that clear discoveries of the divine glory have a tendency, by affecting the mind, to over-

power the body ; and that if these views were attended with the same degree of clearness as they are in heaven, the body could not subsist under them. No man can see God and live. The knowledge which the saints have of the divine glory in this world, and those holy affections which arise from it, are of the same nature with those of the saints in heaven, differing only in degree and circumstances : what God gives them here, is a foretaste of heavenly happiness, and an earnest of their future inheritance ; and who shall limit God, or say he shall give so much of the inheritance—such a part of the future reward—as an earnest of the whole, and no more ? And since God has assured us in his word, that the whole reward is such as would at once destroy the body ; is it not presumptuous in us to set bounds to his sovereignty, and to say, that in giving the earnest of this reward, he shall never give so much of it, as in the least to overpower the body, when he has no where thus bound himself ?

The Prophet Habakkuk speaks of his body being overborne by a sense of the majesty of God : “ When I heard, my belly trembled ; my lips quivered at the voice ; rottenness entered into my bones ; and I trembled in myself.” Hab. 3 : 16.

The prophet Daniel, giving an account of a representation of the glory of Christ, says, “ And there remained no strength in me ; for my comeliness was turned into corruption, and I retained no strength.” Dan. 10 : 8. And the Apostle John, speaking of a similar manifestation made to him, says, “ And when I saw him I fell at his feet as dead.” Rev. 1 : 17. It is in vain to say that these were only external manifestations or symbols of the glory of Christ ; for though they were outward representations, yet the design was

to give to these prophets an idea of the thing represented, and that was the true divine glory and majesty of Christ. In agreement with the end for which God designed these outward signs, they received by them a lively apprehension of the real glory and majesty of his nature, and thus were greatly affected. And I think those persons are very presumptuous, who venture to say that God cannot, or does not, give the same clear and affecting views of the real glory and majesty of his nature, to any of his saints, without the intervention of such shadowy representations.

I would farther observe, that the Scriptures often refer to bodily exercises in order to express the strength of holy and spiritual affections; such as trembling, groaning, crying out, panting, and fainting. Psalm 119 : 120; Ezra, 9 : 4; Isaiah, 66 : 2-5; Hab. 3 : 16; Rom. 8 : 26; Psalm 84 : 2; 38 : 10; 42 : 1; 119 : 131 · 119 : 81. Now if it be said that these are only figurative expressions, it must at least be allowed that they are *suitable figures* to represent the high degree of those affections which the Holy Spirit intended they should represent; but I do not see how they would be so if those spiritual affections have no tendency to produce trembling, &c. but, on the contrary, are the proper effects, and sad tokens of false affections, and the delusion of the devil. I cannot think that God would generally make use of things which are quite opposite to spiritual affections, and evident marks of the hand of Satan, to represent a high degree of holy and heavenly affection.

III. That they render us *fluent, fervent, and abundant, in talking of religion*, is no proof either that our affections about religious things are truly gracious; or that they are not.

There are many persons, who, if they observe any thing of this kind in others, are greatly prejudiced against them. Their being so full of talk is deemed a sufficient reason for condemning them as Pharisees and ostentatious hypocrites. On the other hand, there are many, who, if they observe these effects in any one, are disposed, very imprudently, to conclude at once that he is a true child of God, and under the saving influences of the Holy Spirit: and especially are they confident that such persons are savingly wrought upon, if they are not only fluent, but also affectionate and earnest in their conversation.

But this, as events abundantly show, arises from want of judgment: it is a mistake into which persons often run, by trusting to their own wisdom instead of making the Scriptures their rule. Though the sacred writings are full of directions, by which we are to judge both of our own state, and the state of others; yet we have no where any rules by which we may conclude that we or others are in a good state, from any such effects as these; for this is but the religion of the mouth, and of the tongue, and is in Scripture represented by the leaves of a tree, which, though it ought not to be without them, are no proofs of its goodness.

That persons are disposed to talk much about religion, may arise from a good cause, or from a bad one. It may arise from a great degree of holy affections, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; or it may arise from strong religious affections which are not holy, for still out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. It is the nature of the affections, whatever are their objects, if they are powerfully engaged, to incline us to talk very much of that by which

they are excited; and not only to say much, but to talk very earnestly and fervently. And therefore our talking abundantly and very fervently about religion, can only be an evidence that we are very much affected by something relating to religion; but this may be the case, as I have observed before, where there is no grace. That by which men are greatly affected, they will be earnestly engaged about; and they will be likely to show that earnestness in their conversation and behavior, as the greater part of the Jews in Judah and Galilee did for a while, about the preaching and baptism of John: they were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. The multitude, in like manner, often manifested great earnestness about Christ, and his preaching and miracles; being astonished at his doctrines, receiving his word with joy, following him sometimes night and day, exclaiming, "Never man spake like this man!" But what was the end of these things, with respect to the greater part of them!

A person may be disposed to talk much of his own experience, introducing the subject every where, and in all companies; and when this is the case, it is rather a bad sign than a good one. A tree too full of leaves seldom bears much fruit; and a cloud, though to appearance very pregnant with water, if it is accompanied by much wind, seldom affords any great quantity of rain. The Holy Spirit has been pleased, several times, to make use of this latter circumstance, in order to represent a great show of religion in profession, without corresponding fruits in the life. "Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift, *is like clouds and wind without rain.*" Prov. 25 : 14. See also Jude 4 and 12, and 2 Pet. 2 : 17.

False affections about religion, if they are equally

strong, are much more forward to manifest themselves, than true ones; because it is the nature of false religion to affect show, and to court observation: thus it was with the Pharisees.

IV. That they are *not excited by our own endeavors, or exertions*, is no proof, either that our religious affections are truly gracious, or that they are not.

There are many persons who condemn all religious affections which are excited in a way of which the subjects of them can give no account; and which do not seem to be the effect of their own endeavors, or the result of the faculties and principles of human nature; but seem to arise from the influence of some extrinsic and supernatural power upon their minds.

It is supposed that the Spirit of God co-operates in a silent and imperceptible way, with our own endeavors in the use of means; so that we cannot distinguish between the influences of the Spirit of God, and the natural operations of the faculties of our own minds.

It is true, that for any one to expect to receive the saving influences of the Spirit of God, while a diligent attention to the appointed means of grace is neglected, is unreasonable, presumptuous, and enthusiastical. It is also undoubtedly true, that the Spirit of God is far from being uniform in the manner and circumstances of his operations, and that sometimes he works in a way more secret and gradual, and from smaller beginnings, than at other times.

But if there is indeed a power superior to all means and instruments, and above the utmost efforts of nature; and if that power is requisite in order to the production of saving grace in the heart, then certainly it is not at all unreasonable to suppose, that its effect

should very frequently be produced in such a way as to make it manifest that it is so. If grace is indeed owing to the powerful and efficacious operations of an extrinsic and divine agent, why is it unreasonable to suppose that it should appear to be so to those who are the subjects of it? Is it strange that it should appear to be as it really is? For this, in fact, is the objection: it is regarded as a clear proof, that the affections which many persons experience, are not from a particular cause, because they *appear to be from that cause*: those who possess them declare, that what they are conscious of seems to them evidently not to be from themselves, but from the mighty power of the Spirit of God; and others thence conclude, that what they experience is *not* from the Spirit of God, but from themselves, or from the devil.

If it is indeed true, as the Scriptures abundantly teach, that grace in the soul is so the effect of the power of God, that it is with propriety compared to those effects which are the farthest from being owing to any strength in the subject: such as a generation, being begotten, or raised from the dead—created, &c., then how shall we account for the circumstance, that the Almighty, in so great a work, should so carefully hide his power, that the subjects of it should not be able to discern it? If we may form any conclusion from Scripture, God, in the great works of his power and mercy which he performs for his people, orders things so as to make his power conspicuous, and our dependence on him most evident; that no flesh should glory in his presence, 1 Cor. 1 : 27-29; that he alone should be exalted, Isaiah, 2 : 11-17; that the excellency of the power should be of him, and not of man, 2 Cor. 4 : 7; that the power of Christ should be mani-

fested in our weakness, 2 Cor. 12 : 9 ; and that none should say, Mine own hand hath saved me, Judges, 7 : 2. In most of the conversions of particular persons of which we have an account in the New Testament, they were not wrought upon in that secret, gradual, and insensible manner, which is now insisted upon, but with those manifest tokens of a supernatural power, wonderfully and suddenly causing a great change, which in these days are regarded as undoubted signs of delusion and enthusiasm.

The apostle says, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power," &c. Eph. 1 : 18, 19. Now, when the apostle speaks of the Ephesians being the subjects of divine influence, in their effectual calling, to the end that they might know what his mighty power was to them who believe, he can mean nothing else but that they might know it by experience. But if the saints know this power by experience, they must feel it as being distinguishable from the natural operations of their own minds. So that it is very unreasonable and unscriptural to conclude, that affections *are not* from the gracious operations of the Spirit of God, because they are evidently and sensibly not from the persons themselves who are the subjects of them.

On the other hand, that they are not produced by ourselves, or that they arise in our minds in a manner for which we cannot account, is no proof that such affections *are* gracious.

There are some who make this an argument in their own favor. Speaking of their experience, "We are sure," say they, "that we did not produce it ourselves; it was the effect of no contrivance or endeavor of ours." And hence they very ignorantly conclude, that what they have experienced must be from the mighty influence of the Spirit of God, and is of a saving nature. Indeed, what they have experienced may not be from themselves directly; but it does not follow from thence that it was from the Spirit of God. There are other invisible agents who have influence upon the minds of men, besides the Holy Spirit. We are directed not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits whether they are of God. There are evil spirits, exceedingly busy with men, who often transform themselves into angels of light; and, with great subtlety and power, mimic the operations of the Spirit of God. Many of the operations of Satan are very distinguishable from the voluntary exercises of our own minds. They are so in those horrid and blasphemous suggestions by which some persons are dreadfully harassed, and in those unnecessary and unprofitable terrors by which others are exercised. And the influence of Satan may be as evident in false comforts and joys, as in terrors and horrid suggestions.

And besides, we should remember, that impressions on our minds may be neither of our own producing, nor from an evil spirit, and yet not be from any saving, but from a common influence of the Spirit of God. The subjects of such impressions are of the number of those of whom we read, "who were once enlightened," had "tasted of the heavenly gift, and been made partakers of the Holy Ghost;" had "tasted the good word of God," and had felt "the powers of the world

to come;" but were yet wholly unacquainted with those "better things that accompany salvation." Heb. 6 : 4, 5, 9.

And where neither a good nor an evil spirit has any immediate influence, persons, especially such as are of a weak habit of body, and whose minds are feeble, may have strange imaginations, and strong affections, for which they cannot account. Such persons are liable to impressions of this kind about temporal things; and there is equal reason to conclude, that they may have similar impressions about spiritual things. As a person, when asleep, has dreams of which he is not the voluntary agent, so, when he is awake, he may be the subject of impressions of which also he is not the voluntary agent.

V. That they are produced by *texts of Scripture, suddenly, and in an extraordinary manner, applied to the mind*, is no proof, either that our affections are truly gracious, or that they are not.

That they are occasioned by texts of Scripture thus impressed upon the mind, is no proof that affections are not gracious, provided the Scripture itself, or the truth it contains, is the foundation of the emotion, and not merely, or chiefly, the sudden and unusual manner in which it is brought to the mind.

But, on the other hand, neither is their arising from Scripture, brought suddenly, and in an extraordinary manner to our minds, any proof that our affections about religion *are* gracious. Some persons seem to regard this as a good evidence that their affections are saving, especially if those affections are hope or joy, or any other that are pleasing and delightful. They tell us that particular promises were suddenly brought to their minds, as if they had been spoken to them.

“ We had no hand,” say they, “ in bringing such texts to our minds; we were not thinking of any thing that could tend to produce such an occurrence,” &c. And, perhaps they will add, “ One Scripture came flowing in after another, the most pleasing and appropriate that could have been devised; we were full of joy, and could doubt no longer.” Hence they conclude, that their affections are unquestionably of the right kind, and that their state is really good.

What deceives, on this subject, many of the less informed and considerate kind of professors, seems to be this: the Scriptures are the word of God, and therefore contain nothing but what is strictly true, and in its nature perfectly holy; and hence they conclude, that that experience which proceeds from the application of passages of the sacred writings, must be evangelical. But then it should be considered, that affections may arise from passages of Scripture misinterpreted—not as their genuine fruit, in a right application of them, but from an abuse of them.

Is there any proof that the devil cannot bring texts of Scripture to the mind, and misapply them, for the purpose of deceiving? There appears to be nothing in this beyond the power of Satan. To impress letters or sounds upon a person’s imagination, is not a work of such mighty power that nothing short of omnipotence can be supposed to be sufficient to effect it.

Or does any person suppose, that texts of Scripture are such sacred things that the devil dares not abuse them? If they do, in this also they are mistaken. He who had temerity enough to take Christ himself to different places, into the wilderness—upon a high mountain—and upon a pinnacle of the temple, in order to tempt him, is not afraid to meddle with the Scrip-

tures, and to abuse them for his own purpose. At the same time that he took those liberties with Christ, he repeatedly quoted Scripture, that he might, if possible, deceive him. And if Satan was permitted, and if he presumed to put Christ himself in mind of texts of Scripture for the purpose of tempting him, what reason have we to conclude that he is not permitted, or that he dares not, put wicked men in mind of texts of Scripture, to tempt and deceive *them*? And if Satan may thus abuse one text of Scripture, he may another. Its being a very important passage, a comfortable and precious promise, alters not the case. And if he can bring one comfortable text to the mind, he may a thousand, and may select such Scriptures as tend most to serve his purpose. He may add one Scripture promise to another, tending, according to the perverse application he makes of them, effectually to remove the doubts, and to confirm the false joy and confidence of a poor deluded sinner.

It is evident, then, that we may have high affections, occasioned by texts of scripture coming suddenly, and in an extraordinary manner, to our minds, and yet these affections may not be holy, or any thing but the delusions of Satan.

I would further observe, that we may have elevated and joyful affections coming *with* the word of God; and not only so, but *from* that word, and yet those affections may not proceed from Satan, nor from the depravity of our own hearts, but from some influence of the Spirit of God attending the word; and notwithstanding all this, those affections may possess nothing of the nature of saving religion. The stony ground hearers had great joy, which is represented as arising from the word, as a blade of corn from its seed; and

their affections had, in their appearance, a very great resemblance to those represented by the growth of the seed on the good ground, the difference not appearing until it was discovered by the consequences in a time of trial. Yet there was no saving religion in those affections.

VI. That they are attended by an *appearance of great love*, is no proof, either that our affections are truly gracious, or that they are not.

There are no professing Christians who regard this circumstance as an argument *against* the truth and saving nature of their religious affections; but there are some who consider the appearance of great love as a good evidence that their affections are from the sanctifying and saving influences of the Holy Spirit. They argue that Satan cannot love, this affection being directly contrary to his disposition. His very nature is enmity and malice. It is true, that nothing is more important and amiable than a spirit of true Christian love to God, and to men: it is more excellent than knowledge, or the gift of prophesying, or the power of working miracles, or the ability to speak with the tongues of men and of angels. It is the chief grace of the Spirit of God, and the essence of all true religion. It is that by which we are most conformed to heaven, and most opposed to hell, and the devil. But notwithstanding this, we must not argue from hence that this affection has no counterfeit. It may be observed, that the more excellent any thing is, the more likely is it to be imitated. For instance: there are more counterfeits of silver and gold, than of iron and copper. Though it is more difficult to produce a representation of what is really excellent, yet in proportion as any thing is excellent, will art and ingenuity

be exercised in order to produce an exact resemblance. So it is with Christian virtues and graces; the ingenuity of Satan, and the deceitfulness of the human heart, are chiefly exercised in forming imitations of those which are of highest repute; hence, perhaps, no graces are more frequently counterfeited than *love* and *humility*.

With respect to the former of these, it is evident from Scripture that we may possess a *kind* of religious love, and yet have no saving grace. Christ, speaking of those who possess this kind of affection, asserts, that it will not continue, and that such professors will fail of salvation: "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end shall be saved." Matt. 24: 12, 13.

We may appear to love God with very strong affection, and yet have no grace. This was evidently the case with many of the Jews, who followed Jesus Christ day and night without meat, or drink, or sleep. They said, "Lord, we will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," and cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David."

The Apostle seems to intimate that there were many in his days who had a counterfeit love to Christ: "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ *in sincerity*." Eph. 6: 24.

So also Christian love to the people of God, may be counterfeited. The Galatians were ready to pluck out their eyes, and to give them to the Apostle; although he afterward expresses his fear that their affections had come to nothing, and that he had bestowed upon them labor in vain. Gal. 4: 11, 15.

VII. That we possess *religious affections of different kinds, at the same time*, is no proof, either that those affections are truly gracious, or that they are not.

Though false religion is generally imperfect, or monstrous, and has not that entireness and symmetry of parts which is to be seen in true religion; yet there may be a great variety of false affections existing together, bearing a very close resemblance to those which are gracious.

It is evident that all kinds of gracious affections may be counterfeited. For instance; love to God, and love to the brethren. Godly sorrow for sin, as in the cases of Pharaoh, Saul, and Ahab, and the children of Israel in the wilderness. *Exod. 9 : 27. 1 Sam. 24 : 16, 17, and 6 : 21. 1 Kings, 21 : 27. Numb. 14 : 39, 40.* The fear of God: as in the case of the Samaritans, who feared the Lord, and served their own gods at the same time. *2 Kings, 17 : 32, 33.* And, as in the case of those enemies of God, who, through the greatness of his power, submitted themselves to him; or, as it is in the Hebrew, lied unto him, that is, yielded to him a counterfeit reverence and submission. *Psalm 66 : 3.* Evangelical gratitude may be counterfeited; as in the case of the children of Israel, who sang the praises of God at the Red Sea; *Psalm 106 : 12,* and of Naaman the Syrian, after the miraculous cure of his leprosy. *2 Kings, 5 : 15, &c.*

There may be counterfeits of spiritual joy; as in the case of the stony ground hearers. *Matt. 13 : 20;* and particularly, in the case of many of the hearers of John the Baptist. *John 5 : 35.* Of zeal, as in the case of Jehu, *2 Kings, 10 : 16;* and of Paul before his conversion, *Gal. 1 : 14. Phil. 3 : 6;* and as in the case of the unbelieving Jews. *Acts 22 : 3. Rom. 10 : 2.* Graceless persons may have earnest religious desires, like the desires of Balaam, which he expressed under an extraordinary view of the happy state of the people

of God, as distinguished from the rest of the world. Numb. 23 : 9, 10. They may also have a strong hope of eternal life ; as the Pharisees had.

And as men, while in a state of nature, may have the resemblance of any kind of religious affection, so they may have the resemblance of different religious affections at the same time. Indeed, when any false affection is raised high, there are usually many such attending each other. The multitude who accompanied Christ into Jerusalem, after the raising of Lazarus, appeared to be influenced by different religious affections at the same time, and by each of them in a high degree ; by admiration and love, united with reverence, when they placed their garments on the ground, that Christ might walk upon them ; by gratitude for the great works which he had done among them, when they praised him with loud voices ; by joy, when they made the city ring with their acclamations. It is easy from the nature of our passions, to assign the reason why, when one affection is raised very high, it should excite others, especially if that affection is counterfeit love. For love is the fountain of all the other affections. Let us suppose the case of a person who, for some time, has been in great terror through the fear of hell, distressed with dreadful apprehensions, and upon the very brink of despair ; but who is all at once delivered ; being fully persuaded, through some delusion of Satan, that God has pardoned and accepted him as an object of his love, and that he will certainly confer on him eternal life. What various passions would naturally crowd at once, or immediately one after another, into the mind of such a person. From mere principles of nature, it is easy to be accounted for, that the mind of a person thus

circumstanced, should be raised with transports of joy, and elevated with fervent love, to that imaginary redeemer, who, he supposes, has thus rescued him from the jaws of destruction, and conferred upon him distinguishing privileges; and that now he should be so animated with admiration and gratitude, that, for a while, he can scarcely think, or speak of any thing else; that he should magnify God, and call upon others to rejoice with him; and that, though, before his deliverance, he was disposed to quarrel with the justice of God, now it should be easy for him to submit, and to acknowledge his own unworthiness. Saul, when Samuel told him that God had appointed him to be king, replied, "Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Wherefore, then, speakest thou so to me?" 1 Sam. 9:21. This is similar to the language of David, a true saint: "Who am I, O Lord God! and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" 2 Sam. 7:18.

Nor is it to be wondered at, that now such a one should delight to be with those who acknowledge and rejoice in the happiness of his present state; should love all such as esteem and admire him; should be ready to proclaim war with all who are not of his party, and, like the Pharisees, should be disposed to compass sea and land in order to make one proselyte.

VIII. That *comfort and joy appear to follow awakenings and convictions of conscience in a certain order*, is no proof that religious affections are truly gracious, or that they are not.

Many persons are prejudiced against all religious experience, in which high affections of joy follow great distress and terror. But such prejudices derive

no encouragement either from reason or from Scripture. Surely it cannot be unreasonable, that before God delivers us from a state of sin, and liability to everlasting wo, he should give us some considerable sense of the evil from which he delivers us, in order that we may know and feel the importance of salvation, and be enabled to appreciate the value of what God is pleased to do for us. As those who are saved are successively in two extremely different states—first in a state of condemnation, and then in a state of justification and blessedness—and as God, in the salvation of men, deals with them as rational and intelligent creatures—it appears agreeable to his wisdom, that those who are saved should be made sensible of their being in those two different states. In the first place, that they should be made sensible of their state of condemnation ; and afterward, of their state of deliverance and happiness : that they should be made to feel their absolute need of a Savior, and then be convinced of the sufficiency of Christ, and the perfect readiness with which God is always disposed to exercise mercy through him.

And that it is the manner of God, in dealing with men, first to lead them into the wilderness, and then to speak comfortably to them—to bring them into distress, and make them feel their own helplessness, and absolute dependence on his power and grace, before he appears to work any deliverance for them, is abundantly evident from Scripture. Before God delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt, they were prepared for it by being made to see the wretchedness of their condition, and to cry unto him because of their hard bondage. *Exod. 2 : 23, and 5 : 19.* And before God wrought that great deliverance for them at the

Red Sea, they were brought into great distress: the wilderness had shut them in; they could not turn either to the right hand or to the left; the Red Sea was before them, and the Egyptian host behind them; they were brought to see that they could do nothing for themselves, and that if God did not help them they should be immediately swallowed up—then God appeared, and turned their cries into songs. Instances of this kind, recorded in Scripture, are numerous: See Deut. 8 : 2-16; Luke, 8 : 43, 44; Matt. 15 : 22; 2 Cor. 1 : 8-10; Matt. 8 : 24-26; Lev. 13 : 45; Jer. 3 : 23-25.

And if we consider those extraordinary manifestations which God made of himself to some of the saints of old, we shall find his dealings with them were similar. It was so with Abraham: first a "horror of great darkness fell upon him;" and then God revealed himself to him in the most animating promise. Gen. 15 : 12, 13. It was so with Moses at Mount Sinai: first, God appeared to him in all the terrors of his dreadful majesty, so that this eminent servant of the Lord said, "I exceedingly fear and tremble;" and then he made all his goodness to pass before him, and proclaimed his name, "The Lord God, merciful and gracious," &c. It was so with Elijah: first, there was a stormy wind, and earthquake, and devouring fire; and then a still, small voice, 1 Kings, 19 : 11, 12. It was so with Daniel: he first saw the countenance of Christ, as lightning, which terrified and caused him to faint away; and then he was strengthened and refreshed by such comfortable words as these, "O, Daniel, a man greatly beloved, fear not; peace be unto thee; be strong, yea, be strong." Daniel, 10 : 19.

But there are many things in Scripture which more *directly* show that this is the ordinary way in which

God manifests himself, through Christ, in the work of grace on the hearts of sinners. The prodigal son spends all he has, is brought to feel his circumstances, to humble himself, and to own his unworthiness, before he is received and feasted by his father. Luke, 15 : 11, &c. The servant who owed his lord ten thousand talents is first reminded of his debt; sentenced to be sold, with his wife and his children, in order that payment may be made; and thus he is humbled and brought to own the whole debt to be just; and then all is forgiven him. Our first parents, after they had sinned, were terrified by the majesty and justice of God; and had their sin, with its aggravation, set before them by their judge, before they were relieved by the promise of the Seed of the woman. It seems to be the natural import of the word Gospel, *glad tidings*, that it is news of deliverance and salvation, after great fear and distress.

And if it is really the way in which God proceeds before he communicates the comfort of deliverance, to give men a considerable sense of the greatness of their sins, and the dreadful nature of the punishment to which they are exposed; surely it is not unreasonable to suppose that persons, at least in general, while under these impressions, should have great distress and terrible apprehensions of mind.

From these things it appears to be very unreasonable in professing Christians to object against the spiritual nature of comfortable and joyful affections, because they were preceded by alarming apprehensions and great distress of mind.

And, on the other hand, we must not conclude that comfort and joy are of the right kind, because they

succeed great terrors, and dreadful fears of hell. Some persons lay considerable weight upon this circumstance, regarding great terrors as an evidence of a great work of the law wrought upon the heart, well preparing the mind for solid comfort; not considering that terror, and a conviction of conscience, are different things. For though convictions of conscience often produce terror, they do not consist in it: terrors not unfrequently arise from other causes. Convictions of conscience, produced by the Spirit of God, consist in conviction of the sinfulness, both of the heart and the practice; and of the dreadful guilt of sin, as committed against a God of infinite holiness and strict justice, and who therefore cannot allow it to go unpunished. But there are some persons who have frightful apprehensions of hell, who appear to have very slight convictions of the sinfulness of their hearts and lives. The devil, if permitted, can terrify men, as well as the Spirit of God: it is a work natural to him, and he has many ways of performing it so as to produce no good.

The terrors which some persons experience are very much owing to their particular constitutions and tempers. Nothing is more manifest than that some persons are of such a temper and frame of mind, that their imaginations are more strongly impressed with every thing that affects them, than the imaginations of others would be under similar circumstances. The impression on their imaginations re-acts on their affections and raises them still higher: and so affection and imagination operate reciprocally, till the latter is raised to an extravagant height. Such persons lose all possession of themselves.

Some professors speak of the clear view they have

of their wickedness, who, if we examine them, prove to have little or no convictions of conscience. They complain of a dreadfully hard heart, when in reality they feel none of those things wherein the hardness of the human heart consists. They complain of a dreadful load of sin, and of deep depravity, when they have no view of any thing wherein the heinous nature of sin, and the depravity of the human heart, consist. They tell us how their sins are set in order before them, when in reality they are not penitentially affected by any one sin of which they have been guilty.

If persons have great terrors, which really proceed from the awakening and convincing influence of the Spirit of God, it does not thence follow that their terrors *must necessarily* issue in true comfort. The unmortified depravity of the heart may quench the Spirit of God, and thus lead to presumptuous and self-exalting hopes.

Again; if comfort and joy not only follow great alarm and terror, but if there is also an appearance of such preparatory convictions and humiliation, arising very distinctly, in such order and in such a way as have frequently been observed in true converts—this is no certain proof that the light and comfort which follow are evangelical and saving; and for these reasons.

(1.) As the devil can counterfeit the operations and graces of the Holy Spirit, so he can counterfeit whatever is preparatory to the communications of grace. If Satan can counterfeit those operations of the Spirit of God which are special and sanctifying, much more easily can he imitate those which are common, and of which men, while they are yet his own children, are not unfrequently the subjects. It is abundantly evident that there is false humility, as well as false comfort.

Saul, though a very wicked man, of a haughty spirit, and a great king, when brought, by the conviction of sin, to condemn himself before David, one of his subjects, and one whom he had long hated and treated as an enemy, cries out, "Thou art more righteous than I; for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil!" And at another time, "I have sinned—I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly." 1 Sam. 24 : 16, 17, and 26 : 21. And yet Saul, at that time, seems to have had very little of the divine influences, this being after the Spirit of God had departed from him, and an evil spirit had troubled him. If, then, this proud monarch was brought to humble himself so low before a subject whom he hated, we may doubtless exhibit appearances of great conviction and humiliation before God, while we yet remain enemies to him. There is often, in men who are terrified through the fear of hell, a great appearance of being brought from a dependence on their own righteousness, when they are not in all respects brought from such dependence. They have only exchanged one way of trusting in their own righteousness for another, which is less obvious. Very often a great degree of discouragement, as to some things upon which they were accustomed to depend, is taken for humiliation, and denominated submission to God; though it is no real submission, but arises from some secret compromise which is difficult to be discovered.

(2.) If the operations of the Holy Spirit, in the conviction and comfort of real converts, may be counterfeited, the *order* of them may also be counterfeited. When counterfeits are made, no divine power is needed for the purpose of arranging them in a certain order; and therefore no order, or method of operation and experience, is any certain proof of their divinity

(3.) We have no decisive rule by which we can ascertain how far the Spirit of God may proceed in the work of conviction, without producing a real conversion. There is no necessary connection between any thing that a natural man may experience, and the saving grace of the Holy Spirit. And therefore we do not find that any legal convictions, or any comforts following such convictions, in any certain method or order, are ever mentioned in Scripture as a certain proof of grace, or any thing peculiar to the saints; although we do find that gracious operations and effects themselves, are so mentioned times almost without number. This should be enough with Christians: they should be willing to receive the word of God, rather than their own experience and conjectures, as their sufficient guide in judging of their state in the sight of God.

(4.) Experience very powerfully strengthens the conclusion, that persons seeming to have convictions and comfort following each other in such a method and order as may frequently be observed in true converts, is no proof of grace. I appeal, upon this subject, to those ministers who have had much to do with souls in the late extraordinary season. They will affirm, I have no doubt, that they have known many who do not prove well, who gave a fair account of their experience, and seemed to have been converted in that order and method which has generally been insisted on as the order in which the Spirit of God operates in conversion.

And as the appearance of this distinctness and regularity with regard to method, is no certain proof that a person is converted, so the absence of it is no

decisive evidence that a person is not converted. For though it might be made evident, on Scripture principles, that a sinner cannot be brought heartily to receive Christ as his Savior, who is not convinced of his sin, his helplessness, and his just desert of eternal condemnation; and that therefore such convictions must be some way included in what is wrought in his soul; yet nothing proves it to be necessary, that all those things which are presupposed or implied in an act of faith in Christ, must be wrought in the soul in so many successive and separate works of the Spirit that shall each one be obvious and manifest; on the contrary, sometimes the change at first is like a confused chaos, so that we know not what to make of it. The manner in which the Holy Spirit operates in those who are born of God is very often exceedingly mysterious: the effects only of those operations are discernible. It is to be feared that some have gone too far in attempting to direct the Spirit of the Lord, and to mark out his footsteps for him. Experience clearly shows, that we cannot trace the operations of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of some who afterward prove the best of Christians. He does not proceed discernibly in the steps of any particular, established scheme, by any means so often as is imagined. A rule received and established by common consent, has very great, though to many persons an insensible influence in forming their notions of the process of their own experience. I know very well how they proceed as to this matter, for I have had frequent opportunities of observing their conduct. Very often their experience, at first appears like a confused chaos, but then those parts are selected which bear the nearest resemblance to such particular steps as are insisted on; and these

are dwelt upon in their thoughts, and spoken of from time to time, till they grow more and more conspicuous in their view, and other parts which are neglected grow more and more obscure. Thus what they have experienced is insensibly strained, so as to bring it to an exact conformity to the scheme already established in their minds. And it becomes natural also for ministers, who have to deal with those who insist upon distinctness and clearness of method, to do so too. But yet so much has been seen of the operations of the Spirit of God of late, that those who have had much to do with souls and are not blinded by prejudice, must know that the Holy Spirit is so exceedingly various in the manner of his operations, that, in many cases, it is impossible to trace him.

What we have principally to do with, in our inquiries into our own state, or in the directions we give to others, is the nature of the effects which God has produced in the soul. We are often, in Scripture, directed to try ourselves by the *nature of the fruits* of the Spirit; but no where by the *method* in which the Spirit produces those fruits. Many persons greatly err in their notions of a clear work of conversion; calling that clear in which the successive steps of influence, and the method of experience, are most discernible; whereas that is the clearest work of conversion in which the spiritual nature of the work is most evident.

IX That they lead us to *spend much time in religion, and to be zealously engaged in the external duties of worship*, is no proof either that our affections relative to these things are truly gracious, or that they are not.

That they spend so much time in reading, praying,

singing, hearing sermons, and similar exercises, has, of late, been urged as an argument against the religious affections of some professors. It is clear from Scripture, that true grace very much tends to produce in us a delight in such religious exercises. This was the case with Anna the prophetess: "She departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings, and prayer night and day." Luke, 2 : 37. This was the case also with the primitive Christians in Jerusalem: "and they continued daily with one accord in the temple; and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God." Acts, 2 : 46, 47. Grace disposed Daniel to delight in the duty of prayer, and to attend to it solemnly three times a day. It had the same effect with regard to David: "Evening, morning, and at noon, will I pray." Psalm 55 : 17. Grace disposes the saints to delight in singing the praises of God: "Praise ye the Lord; for it is good to sing praises unto our God: for it is pleasant, and praise is comely." Psalm 147 : 1. See also Psalm 135 : 3. It disposes them to love the public worship of God: "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, the place where thine honor dwelleth." Psalm 26 : 8. See also Psalm 27 : 4, and 84. This is the nature and tendency of true grace.

But on the other hand, our being disposed to abound in the external exercises of religion, and to spend much time in them, is no certain proof of grace; because such a disposition is found in many persons who evidently have no grace. The Israelites of old, whose services were abominable to God, attended the new moons, and Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies: they spread forth their hands and made many prayers.

Isaiah, 1 : 12-15. The Pharisees made long prayers, and fasted twice in the week. False religious affections may lead persons to be loud and earnest in prayer : "Ye shall not fast *as ye do this day*, to cause your voice to be heard on high." Isaiah, 58 : 4. A kind of religion which is not spiritual or saving, may cause men to delight in religious duties and ordinances : "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God : they ask of me the ordinances of justice : they take delight in approaching to God." Isaiah, 58 : 2. Persons under the influence of false religion may delight in hearing the word of God preached. This was the case with the hearers of Ezekiel : "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them ; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument ; for they hear thy words, but they do them not." Ezek. 33 : 31, 32. See also Mark, 6 : 20 ; John, 5 : 35.

Experience shows that persons, from the influence of false and erroneous views, may be induced to abound in the external services of religion, so as to devote almost the whole of their time to them. Formerly a sort of people were very numerous in the Romish church, called recluses, who forsook the society of mankind and shut themselves up in narrow cells, vowing never more to see the face of any human being, (except in case of sickness,) and to spend all their days in the exercises of devotion and converse with God. There were also in former times a great num-

ber of hermits and anchorites, who forsook the world in order to spend their days in religious contemplation, and in the exercises of devotion, in lonely deserts. Some of them had no dwelling places but the caves in the mountains, nor any food but the spontaneous productions of the earth.

X. That they very much dispose us in words to praise and glorify God, is no proof that our most zealous affections are truly gracious; or that they are not. This indeed is implied in what has just now been observed; but as great stress has been laid upon this circumstance, I thought it deserved a more particular consideration.

No Christian will make it an argument *against* any professor that he seems to have such a disposition; neither can it with propriety be regarded as an evidence *in favor* of any professor; if it is duly considered, that without grace we may possess high affections toward God, and in consequence of this may be inclined to speak much and very earnestly about those things by which we are affected. It will appear more evidently that this is no certain indication of grace, if we consider the information which the Scriptures give upon this subject. See Mark, 2 : 12; 9 : 8; Luke, 5 : 26; Matt. 15 : 31; Luke, 7 : 16; 4 : 15. The multitude praised the Lord Jesus with loud voices a little before he was crucified, crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, hosanna in the highest." And we are told, that after the ascension of Christ, when the Apostles had healed the impotent man, "all men glorified God for that which was done." Acts, 4 : 21. When the Gentiles, in Antioch of Pisidia, heard from Paul and Barnabas, that God would reject the Jews, and take the Gentiles

to be his people, they "glorified the word of the Lord;" but all who did so were not true believers. See Acts, 13 : 48. The children of Israel sang the praises of God at the Red Sea, but they soon forgot his works.

That we are greatly affected by the unmerited favor of God, and are very much disposed to extol and magnify free grace, is no certain proof that we are graciously affected. Those who yet remain with unmortified pride and enmity against God may exclaim against their unworthiness, and magnify his undeserved goodness to them, from no higher a principle than that which actuated Saul; who, while he remained with unsubdued enmity against David, was brought to cry out, "I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly;" and with great apparent affection and admiration, to extol the unmerited kindness of David toward him. 1 Sam. 24 : 16-19, and 26 : 21. The account we have of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius are illustrative of this subject. See Dan. 3 : 28-30; 4 : 1, 2, 3, 34, 35, 37, and 6 : 25-27.

XI. That they fill us with *strong confidence, as to the divine origin of our experience and the safety of our state*, is no proof either that our religious affections are truly gracious, or that they are not.

It is argued by some, that those persons are deluded who profess to be assured of the goodness of their state, and to have no doubts respecting their interest in the favor of God. They suppose that there is no such thing to be expected in the Church of God as a full assurance of hope; unless it is under some very extraordinary circumstances. This is contrary to the doctrine of the first Protestants, maintained by their most celebrated writers against the Papists; as well as contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture. It is very

evident, that assurance was a common privilege with the saints, of whom we have a particular account in Scripture. God in the clearest and most positive manner, revealed and testified his special favor to Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Moses, Daniel, and others. Job often speaks of his sincerity and uprightness with the greatest confidence, frequently calling God to witness: "I know," says he, "that my Redeemer liveth, and that I shall see him for myself, and not another." Job, 19 : 25, &c. David, in the book of Psalms, speaks almost every where, without any hesitation, and in the most confident manner, of God as his God; glorying in him as his portion and heritage, his rock and confidence, his shield and high tower, &c. &c. Hezekiah appeals to God, as knowing that he had "walked before him in truth and with a perfect heart." 2 Kings, 20 : 3. Jesus Christ, in his last discourse with his eleven disciples, often declares his special and everlasting love to them, in the clearest terms; and promises them a future participation with him in his glory, in the most absolute manner. This he did, as he tells them, that their joy might be full. John, 15 : 11. See also 16 : 33. He concluded this discourse with a prayer, in which he speaks of them to his Father, in their presence, as having all of them savingly known him. He declares that they were not of the world, and that he spake these things, to the end that his joy might be fulfilled in them. Hence it appears agreeable to the designs of Christ, and his various dispensations in reference to his Church, that there should be provision made that his saints should have the full assurance of their future glory.

The Apostle Paul, throughout all his epistles, speaks in the language of assurance; perpetually declaring his special relation to Christ, his Lord, and Master, and Re-

deemer, and invariably expressing his firm expectation of the future and everlasting reward. It would be almost endless to notice all the passages to this effect which might be enumerated : I will mention four only ; “ Christ liveth in me ; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” Gal. 2 : 20. “ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” Phil. 1 : 21. “ I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” 2 Tim. 1 : 12. “ I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith : henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge,” will “ give me at that day.” 2 Tim. 4 : 7, 8.

The nature of the covenant of grace, and the declared intention of God in the appointment and constitution of that covenant, clearly show that ample provision has been made in order that the saints may enjoy an assured hope of eternal life. This covenant is “ ordered in all things and sure.” The promises are explicit, and often repeated. The design of God in this provision is, no doubt, that the heirs of promise may have a full assurance of their future glory : “ Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath ; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” Heb. 6 : 17, 18. But all this would be in vain, as to any such purpose, if the knowledge of our interest in them, in ordinary cases, was not attainable. For the promises of God, let them be ever so certain as to their accomplishment, can afford

strong hope and consolation only so far as we enjoy the assurance of their applying to ourselves. And in vain is provision made in Jesus Christ, that believers may be perfect as pertaining to the conscience, (Heb. 9 : 9;) if assurance of freedom from the guilt of sin is not attainable.

It further appears that assurance is not only attainable in some extraordinary, but also in ordinary cases; for believers, in general, are exhorted to give all diligence to make their calling and election sure. 2 Pet. 1 : 5, 10. It is spoken of as something very blameable in Christians, not to know whether Christ be in them or not: "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" 2 Cor. 13 : 5. St. Paul says, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly." 1 Cor. 9 : 26. And to add no more, it is evident that Christians may, in general, know their interest in the saving benefits of Christianity, because the Apostles tell us by what means *they* did so: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." 1 Cor. 2 : 12. "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." 1 John, 2 : 3. "But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily the love of God is perfected: hereby we know that we are in him." Verse 5. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." 3 : 14. "Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." Verse 14. "Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." Verse 24. See also 4 : 13, and 5 : 2, and 19.

It must therefore be very unreasonable to conclude that persons are hypocrites, merely because they appear to have no doubt of their salvation.

On the other hand, there is no sufficient reason to conclude that men are saints, and that their affections are gracious, merely because those affections are attended by a high degree of confidence. Nothing can be argued from such confidence, let it be ever so strong. If we observe a person who frequently, and without any hesitation, speaks in the most familiar and appropriating language in prayer; who uses the most confident expressions as to the goodness of his state; who appears to have done for ever with self-examination, and who is disposed to be angry with those who intimate their doubts as to his spiritual safety, we may, with a high degree of probability, conclude that all is not well. Such lofty, violent confidence as this, is not true Christian assurance; it savors more of the spirit of the Pharisees, who never doubted of their being the most eminent of saints; and who, when Christ intimated that they were spiritually blind, despised the suggestion. John, 9 : 40. If such persons had more of the spirit of the Publican, their confidence would have more of the assurance of one who humbly trusts in Christ, and has no confidence in himself. If we do but consider the natural state of the human mind, and how much the unregenerate are under the influence of spiritual blindness and self-flattery, we shall not at all wonder at the high opinion which they entertain of their own goodness, and the confidence with which they express themselves, as to the safety of their religious circumstances before God.

When hypocrites are established in a false hope they have not those things to disturb their confidence which are often the occasion of doubt to the real saint. They have not that deep sense of the vast importance of a sure foundation, and that dread of being deceived

The comforts of a true saint promote caution, and a solemn impression upon the mind of the infinite holiness, justice, and omniscience of the supreme Judge. But false comforts banish these things, and dreadfully stupify the mind. The hypocrite has not the knowledge of his own blindness, and the deceitfulness of his own heart; nor that low opinion of his own understanding, which the real saint possesses. The devil does not assault the hope of the hypocrite as he does the hope of the true believer. Satan is a great enemy to evangelical hope, not only as it tends greatly to the comfort of him who possesses it, but also as it tends very much to promote and cherish grace in the heart, and stimulate to strictness and diligence in the Christian life. But he is no enemy to the hope of a hypocrite, as this principle tends very much to establish his interest in those who are under its influence. A hypocrite may retain his hope unmolested; the devil never attempts to disturb it. But perhaps there is no true Christian whose hope is not assailed by Satan. He tempted Christ; and the servant is not above his master, nor the disciple above his Lord. He who entertains a false hope, has not that conviction of his depravity which the saint possesses of his. The sins of a real Christian appear to him with all their aggravations; and it often seems a very mysterious thing to him that any grace can be consistent with such depravity. But a false hope hides corruption, so that the hypocrite appears clean in his own eyes.

There are two kinds of hypocrites; the one are deceived by their morality and external religion; the other are deceived by false discoveries and elevations of mind. The latter often declaim against dependence on good works, and talk much of free grace; but at

the same time make a righteousness of their discoveries and experience. These two kinds of professors, Mr. Shepard, in his Exposition of the parable of the ten virgins, distinguishes by the names of *legal* and *evangelical* hypocrites; and often speaks of the latter as being in a worse state than the former. It is evident that the latter are by far the more confident in their hope, and I have scarcely known an instance of professors of this description being undeceived. The chief ground of the confidence of many of them is the very same kind of impulses, and imagined revelations, which some of late have had concerning future events. They call these suggestions respecting the goodness of their state, the witness of the Spirit; entirely misunderstanding the nature of that witness, as I shall show hereafter. Visions and impulses about other things have generally been such as were desired and expected; and no wonder that persons who give heed to them have the same kind of discoveries and impressions about their eternal salvation, especially if they earnestly seek and expect them. Neither is it any wonder that, when they have such imagined revelations of the goodness of their state, they should be filled with the highest degree of confidence. They suppose that the great **JEHOVAH** has declared certain things to them, and that, having his immediate testimony, a strong confidence is the highest virtue. Hence they despise all argument and inquiry respecting their own state.

The confidence of many of those, whom Mr. Shepard calls evangelical hypocrites, is like the confidence of some mad men who imagine that they are kings; they maintain their delusion in direct opposition to evidence and reason. And in one sense this confi

dence is much more immoveable than a truly gracious assurance: the latter is not maintained but as the soul is kept in a holy frame, and grace continues in lively exercise. If the actings of grace decay in the Christian, and he falls into a lifeless frame, he loses his assurance; but the confidence of the hypocrite is not shaken by sin. Some hypocrites, at least, maintain their hope in the most unchristian frame, and in the pursuit of the most abandoned conduct.

And here I cannot but observe, that there are certain doctrines, frequently delivered from the pulpit, which ought to be mentioned with more caution and explanation than they generally are; for as they are understood by many, they tend greatly to establish this delusion and false confidence. The doctrines to which I allude, are those of Christians living by faith, and not by sight; their giving glory to God, by trusting him in the dark; living upon Christ, and not upon experience; not making their good frames the foundation of their faith, &c. These are important doctrines, rightly understood, but destructive, as many understand them. The Scriptures speak of living, or walking by faith, and not by sight; by which is meant, a being governed by a respect to eternal things, which are the objects of faith, and not by a respect to temporal things, which are the objects of sight. This will be evident to any one who examines those parts of Scripture which speak of *faith* in opposition to *sight*. See 2 Cor. 4: 18; 5: 7. Heb. 11: 8, 13, 17, 27, 29; John, 20: 29. But this doctrine is understood by many, as if professors ought firmly to trust in Christ without spiritual light, and although they are in a lifeless frame, and for the present have no gracious experience. It is the duty of those who are thus in darkness, to

come out of darkness into light, and believe. That they should confidently believe and trust, while they remain without spiritual light, is an unscriptural and absurd doctrine. The Scriptures are ignorant of any faith in Christ which is of the operation of God, and which is not founded on a spiritual sight of Christ. That trust in Christ which accompanies a title to everlasting life, is a seeing the Son, and believing on him, John, 6 : 40. True faith in Christ is never exercised any further than persons behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and have the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 2 Cor. 3 : 18 ; 4 : 6. They into whose minds the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, does not shine, do not believe. 2 Cor. 4 : 4. That faith which is without spiritual light, is not the faith of the children of light, and of the day, but the presumption of the children of darkness. Hence it appears, that to urge professors to believe, without any spiritual light, tends greatly to help forward the delusions of the prince of darkness. Men not only cannot exercise faith without some spiritual light, but they can exercise faith only just in proportion as they have spiritual light. They will trust in God only as they know him ; and they cannot exercise faith in him any further than they possess a believing view of his faithfulness and all-sufficiency : nor can they exercise trust in him any further than they are in a gracious frame. They who are in a dead, carnal frame, doubtless ought to trust in God, because that would be the same thing as coming out of their bad frame, and turning to God ; but to exhort men to trust confidently in God, while they are not in a gracious frame, is the same thing in effect as to exhort them to trust, not with a holy-confidence, but

with a wicked presumption. It is just as impossible for men to have a strong and lively trust in God, when they have no sensible experience, as it is for them to be in the lively exercise of grace without the exercise of grace.

It is indeed the duty of the people of God to trust in him when they are in darkness, when the aspect of his providence is gloomy, and when, in this respect, he appears to have forsaken them. We ought to trust him when we do not see which way it is possible for him to fulfill his word; when every thing but his promise seems to render the fulfillment unlikely, so that we have to hope against hope. Thus the ancient patriarchs; thus Job, and the Psalmist, and Jeremiah, and Daniel; thus Shadrach, and Meshach, and Abednego, and the Apostle Paul, gave glory to God by trusting him, though all was darkness around them. We have many instances of such victorious faith in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews. But this is a different thing from trusting in God without spiritual light.

There are different kinds of spiritual light; hence there *is* such a thing as our trusting in God, and also knowing the goodness of our state, while we are destitute of some kinds of experience. As, for instance, we may have clear views of the sufficiency and faithfulness of God, and so confidently trust in him, and know that we are his children, and at the same time not have such strong perceptions of his love as at other times. We may have such a view of the sovereignty, holiness, and all-sufficiency of God, as enables us quietly to submit to him, and exercise hope in him, while we have not full assurance as to the goodness of our state. But this also is different from trusting confidently in God without spiritual light or experience.

Those who thus insist on our living by faith, when we have no experience and are in a bad frame, are also very absurd in their notions of faith. What they mean by faith, is believing that they are in a good state. Hence they count it a dreadful sin for any one to doubt as to his spiritual safety, whatever frame he is in, and though his life is not at all exemplary, because this is the great and heinous sin of unbelief; and, according to their opinion, he is the best man, and most effectually honors God, who maintains his hope with the greatest confidence, when he has the least light or experience, and is in the most anti-christian frame—because, they say, this is an evidence of strong faith, giving glory to God, and against hope believing in hope. But from whence do they learn, that faith is our believing with confidence that our state is good? If this is faith the Pharisees had faith in an eminent degree, some of whom, Christ assures us, committed the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost. The Scriptures represent faith as that by which men are brought *into* a good state; and therefore it cannot be the same thing as believing that they *are already* in a good state. To suppose that faith consists in believing that we are spiritually safe, is in effect the same thing as to suppose that faith consists in believing that we have faith, or in believing that we believe.

Our doubting may, indeed, in several respects, arise from unbelief. It may be from unbelief, or because our faith is so small, that we have so little evidence of the goodness of our state. If we had more experience of the actings of faith, and consequently more experience of the exercise of grace, we should have clearer evidence that our state is good, and so our doubts would be removed. Again; our doubts are from un-

belief, when, though there are many things in us which present favorable indications of a work of grace, we still doubt whether we are really in a state of favor with God or not, because we are so unworthy, and have done so much to provoke him to anger. Our doubts in such a case arise from unbelief, as they spring from the want of a sufficient reliance on the infinite riches of the grace of God, and the sufficiency of Christ for the salvation of the chief of sinners. Our doubts arise from unbelief when we question the goodness of our state, because of the mysteriousness of the divine dispensations toward us; or when we doubt whether we have an interest in the promises, because, from the aspect of divine providence, they appear so unlikely to be fulfilled. Such doubts arise from a want of dependence upon the power, the knowledge and the wisdom of God. But yet in such cases our unbelief and our doubts are not the same thing: one arises from the other.

Persons are greatly to blame for doubting as to the goodness of their state on such grounds as these: they are to blame that they have no more grace—no more of the experience and present exercise of grace, as an evidence to themselves of the goodness of their state. Men are doubtless to blame for being in a carnal, dead frame; but when they are in such a frame, under the prevalence of their lusts and an unchristian spirit, they are not to blame for doubting. It is impossible, in the nature of things, that a holy, Christian hope, should be kept alive, in its clearness and strength, under such circumstances. Past experience, when darkened by prevailing depravity, will never keep alive a gracious confidence. Nor is it at all to be lamented that persons under such circumstances

should feel doubts respecting their state ; it is desirable, and quite right that they should doubt. It is agreeable to that wise and merciful constitution of things which God has established, that when the love of his people decays, fear should arise ; for *then* they have need of that fear to restrain them from sin, and to stir them up to watchfulness and diligence in religion. God has also so ordered it, that when love is in vigorous exercise fear should be expelled ; for *then* they do not need it, having a more effectual principle in exercise to restrain them from sin and to stir them up to duty. No principle, except fear or love, will effectually influence the human conduct ; and therefore, if the former of these should not prevail, as the latter decays, the people of God, when fallen into a cold and lifeless frame, would be lamentably exposed indeed. As light and darkness in the constitution of the universe necessarily succeed each other, and as in proportion as light decreases so darkness prevails ; so it is in the economy of grace ; if divine love decays, and corruption prevails, hope also decays, and doubts prevail ; and if, on the contrary, divine love prevails, and is in lively exercise, hope is revived, corruption is subdued, and fear is expelled. Love is the spirit of adoption, or the child-like principle ; fear is the spirit of bondage, or the servile principle ; if love declines, fear prevails ; and so on the contrary. If love rises to a great height, it drives away all fear, and produces full assurance. “ There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear.” 1 John, 4 : 18. These two opposite principles are productive of hope, or despondency, in proportion as either of them prevails, at least when they are left to their natural influence, without something adventitious, or accidental intervening, as the

distemper of melancholy, doctrinal ignorance, prejudices of education, wrong instruction, false principles, strong temptation, &c. When fear prevails, owing to the low state of our love, it is in vain to pore over our past experience in order to establish our peace and obtain assurance. It is contrary to the design of God that we should possess assurance under such circumstances.

Those therefore directly thwart the wise and gracious constitution of things, who, under a notion of living by faith and not by sight, exhort others to be confident in their hope when in a cold and lifeless frame; and urge them not to doubt of the goodness of their state, lest they should be guilty of the dreadful sin of unbelief. This has a direct tendency to establish the most presumptuous hypocrites, and to prevent them from ever calling their state in question. Doubtless great mischief has been done in this way.

We cannot be said to live upon our experience, merely because we use it as an evidence of grace; for there is no other evidence which ought to be relied on. Persons may be said to live upon their experience, when they make a righteousness of it; and instead of keeping their eyes on the glory of God, and the excellency of Christ, turn them from these objects to their own attainments and experience; and when, in their own estimation, they are rich, and increased in goods and have need of nothing, and think that God admires them for the same reason that they admire themselves. This is more abominable in the sight of the Most High than the gross immoralities of those who make no pretences to religion. This conduct, however, is far different from merely using our experience as an evidence of our interest in the Redeemer.

XII. That the manifestation of our affections, and the account given of them, are *very pleasing and affecting to the really pious, and procure their good opinion and esteem*, is no proof either that they are truly gracious, or that they are not.

The saints have not such a spirit of discernment as to ascertain with certainty who are godly, and who are not; for though they know experimentally what true religion is, none of them can feel or perceive the exercises of it in the hearts of others. Nothing in others can come within their view but outward manifestations; and the scriptures clearly intimate that to judge from appearances is, at best, but uncertain, and liable to deception: "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." 1 Sam. 16: 7. They are but poor judges, and dangerous counsellors, in cases of the soul, who are precipitate in deciding as to the real state of any particular professor. They betray one or more of these three things;—little experience;—a weak judgment;—or a great degree of self-confidence. Wise and experienced men proceed with greater caution.

It is the duty of the saints to receive those who exhibit a credible appearance of piety; and to love them, and rejoice in them, as their brethren in Christ Jesus. But the best of men may be deceived. It often happens that brilliant professors, who are received into the church of Christ as eminent saints, fall away, so that their profession comes to nothing. At this we shall not wonder, if we consider what has been already observed. A man who is without a spark of grace may have religious affections of many kinds together; a sort of love to God, and to the brethren, bearing a strong resemblance to real love; he may have sorrow

for sin, self-abasement, gratitude, joy, ardent desires and zeal for the interest of religion and the good of souls. And these affections may follow awakenings and convictions of conscience; a kind of love and joy may follow these convictions, and may succeed each other, just in the same order as is commonly observed in the holy affections of true converts. These affections may be very strong, so as to make those who are the subjects of them affectionate, fervent, and ready in speaking of the things of God. They may be attended by many texts of scripture deeply impressed upon the mind, so as to induce those who are the subjects of this experience, in a very ardent manner to praise God, and to call upon others to join them; to declaim against their unworthiness, and to extol free grace; to abound in the duties of religion, such as prayer, hearing the word preached, singing, and religious conversation; and these things may be attended by a great degree of confidence. I may add, that all these things may be accompanied by a good natural temper, and a clear doctrinal knowledge of religion; and from a long acquaintance with the phraseology used in reference to experimental religion, such professors may have acquired the habit of expressing themselves upon this subject as the saints usually do—I think it has been made evident that there may be all these things, and yet nothing more than the common influences of the Spirit of God, joined with the delusions of Satan and the deceitfulness of the human heart. The resemblance between a hypocrite and a real saint may indeed be very great. It is the sole prerogative of the omniscient God, as the great searcher of hearts, to separate with accuracy the sheep from the goats.

Many persons seem to attach great importance to

the following circumstance, and suppose it sufficient to decide with respect to the state of others; that is, when not only a plausible story is told, but when, in giving an account of experience, such a representation is made as harmonizes with their own experience, so that their hearts are affected and delighted by what they hear, and their love drawn out toward the persons making the relation. But there is not that certainty in these things which many persons imagine, nor ought any confidence to be placed in them. A real saint greatly delights in holiness; and the work of God in renewing and making holy and happy, a soul, which before was hastening to endless perdition, appears to him a glorious work: no wonder that he is greatly affected when he hears a professor give a probable account of this work on his own heart, and sees in him favorable appearances of holiness; whether those appearances are attended by a real work of grace, or not.

If the words which are in general adopted to express religious affection, are used; if many things are related as following one another in an order agreeable to the experience of him who hears; and, if this relation is made with an air of confidence; it is no wonder if a favorable opinion is formed as to the state of him who relates his experience. And if, besides all this, the relation is made with much affection; and above all, if in speaking, much affection toward him who is spoken to is manifested, this will have a powerful influence in affecting the heart of the hearer. David, it appears, had enjoyed much pleasure in the conversation of Ahithophel, and was therefore exceedingly surprised and disappointed when the latter fell. "We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company." Psalm 55. 14.

It is with professors of religion, especially with those who become such at a time of great outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as it is with blossoms in the spring: there are vast numbers of them on the trees, all of which look fair and promising, but yet very many of them come to nothing. Many of them soon wither and drop off, though for a while they looked as beautiful and smelled as sweetly as those that remain; so that we cannot by our senses ascertain, with certainty, those blossoms which have in them the secret virtue which will afterward appear in the fruit. We must judge, not by the beautiful colors and the pleasant smell of the blossom, but by the matured fruit. So young professors may appear very promising; pious persons may think they talk feelingly, may relish their conversation, and imagine that they perceive in it a divine savor; and yet all their profession may prove to be nothing.

It is wonderful with what difficulty we become satisfied with the rules and directions which Christ has given us. We prefer rules of our own inventing. Christ has directed us to judge of the tree chiefly by its fruit; but this we deem insufficient: other criterions must be devised, supposed to be more distinguishing and certain. This presumption has been followed by consequences of the most baneful description. In this respect, many of the saints, I have no doubt, have wandered far out of their way; and, in order that they might be brought back, some of them have been severely chastised. But many things which have lately appeared ought to have convinced us, that in general those who have been most confident of their discernment, and have appeared most forwardly and suddenly to decide as to the state of men's souls, have been hypocrites, who have known nothing of true religion themselves.

In the parable of the wheat and the tares, it is said, "When the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also;" as if the tares, as Mr. Flavel observes, were not to be distinguished from the wheat until that time. He mentions an observation of Jerome, who remarks that wheat and tares are so much alike, that until the ear begins to put forth, it is almost impossible to distinguish them. Mr. Flavel then adds, "How difficult soever it is to discern the difference between wheat and tares; yet doubtless the eye of sense can much easier discriminate them, than the most quick and piercing eye of man can discern the difference between special and common grace. For all saving graces in the saints have their counterfeits in hypocrites: there are similar works in these, which a spiritual and a very judicious eye may easily mistake for the saving and genuine effects of a sanctifying spirit."

I would say something in this place as to a strange notion, which some persons have adopted of late, about certainly knowing the goodness of the state of others from their love flowing out to them in an extraordinary manner. If their love is very sensible and great, the Spirit of God, they say, must have been the author of it; and as he is an infallible Spirit, and never deceives, he must know that the person whom they love is a child of God, and must intend that they should love him as such. But such persons might be convinced of the fallacy of their reasoning, if they would but consider, whether or not it is their duty, to love those as the children of God of whom they have no reason to think otherwise, though he who searches their hearts knows them not to be his children. If it is their duty to love persons of this description, then not to love them is sin,

and therefore the Spirit of God may undoubtedly be the author of this affection. The Spirit of God, without being a spirit of falsehood, may, in such a case, assist us in the performance of our duty—But the uncommon degree, and special manner, in which their love is excited, are also used as an argument in favor of this notion. They think that the Spirit of God would never be the author of such affection, if he did not know that the subjects of it were children of God.—But I would ask, is it not our duty to love, in a very high degree, all those who we have reason to believe are the children of God, though they may not be such in reality? As we ought to love Christ to the utmost of our capacity, so it is our duty to love those who we have reason to believe are his members with great affection; and therefore not to love them to such a degree, is sin. We ought to pray to God that he would by his Spirit keep us from sin, and enable us to perform our duty; and cannot he answer our prayers in this particular without lying? If he cannot, then the Spirit of God, in some cases, is bound not to help his people to perform their duty, because, if he did, he would be a spirit of falsehood; but undoubtedly God may enable us to perform any duty.

When we are led to conclude that particular persons are his children, God may have other ends in view in causing our love to be excited toward them, than that of revealing to us the real state of such professors.

If I am at a distance from home, and hear that my house is burnt, but that my family, in some extraordinary manner, have all escaped; and if every thing in the circumstances of the intelligence makes it appear very credible; in such a case it would be highly sinful, were I not to feel a very great degree of gratitude

even though the information I had received should prove without foundation. That error or mistake may be the occasion of a gracious exercise, and consequently of the gracious influence of the Spirit of God, appears from Rom. 14 : 6 : "He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks ; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks." The Apostle is here speaking of those who through erroneous and needless scruples avoided eating certain meats ; and from hence it appears that there may be true exercises of grace, and particularly, true thankfulness, occasioned by an erroneous judgment and practice ; and consequently an error may be the occasion of those holy exercises which are from the infallible Spirit of God ; and if so, we cannot determine with certainty as to the degree in which the Spirit of God may produce them on such an occasion.

This notion of ascertaining the state of others by our love being excited toward them, is anti-scriptural. The sacred writings say nothing of any such mode of judging respecting the state of others, but direct us to form our opinion of them chiefly from the fruits they produce. The scriptures clearly teach, that we cannot with certainty ascertain the real state of others. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it." Rev. 2 : 17. "He is a Jew" who "is one inwardly ; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God." Rom. 2 : 29. That by the expression, "whose praise is not of men, but of God," the Apostle had respect to the insufficiency of men to judge concerning him, whether he was inwardly a Jew

or not, is confirmed by his use of similar language in another place: "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart; and then shall every man have praise of God." 1 Cor. 4 : 5. The Apostle in the two verses immediately preceding says, "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self; for I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified:—he that judgeth me is the Lord." Again, the Apostle in the second chapter to the Romans, quoted above, addresses himself particularly to those who had a high opinion of their own holiness and discernment, were confident that they knew the will of God, and approved the things which were excellent, or tried the things that differ. They were confident that they were guides of the blind, and a light to them that were in darkness, instructors to the foolish, teachers of babes. Hence they took upon themselves to judge others. See ver. 1, 17, 18, 19, 20.

How presumptuous are the notions of those persons, who imagine that they certainly know the state of others, when the great Apostle Peter does not venture to say more concerning Sylvanus, than that he was a faithful brother, *as he supposed!* 1 Pet. 5 : 12. Sylvanus however appears to have been a very eminent minister of Christ, an Evangelist, and an intimate companion of the Apostles. See 2 Cor. 1 : 19. 1 Thess. 1; 1. and 2 Thess. 1 : 1.

PART THIRD.

ON THE DISTINGUISHING SIGNS OF TRULY GRACIOUS AND HOLY AFFECTIONS.

I COME NOW to the SECOND thing proposed, respecting the trial of religious affections; that is, to take notice of some circumstances wherein *those affections which are spiritual and gracious differ from those which are not*. But before I proceed to those characteristics which I have in view, I would make some observations which I desire may be remembered.

Observation I. I am far from undertaking to point out such signs as shall be sufficient to enable persons to *distinguish in others*, with absolute certainty, true religious affections from false ones. Were I to attempt this, I should be guilty of that presumption which I have been condemning. Though Christ has given rules, by which we may judge respecting professors, so far as is necessary in reference to social intercourse and church communion; and though the Scriptures abound with rules which may be serviceable to ministers, in advising and directing persons committed to their care in things pertaining to their spiritual and everlasting welfare; yet it is evident, that it never was the design of God to give us rules by which we may ascertain with certainty which of our fellow professors are his, and which are not. This discernment he has reserved to himself, as his own prerogative.

Observation II. No such criterions are to be expected, as shall be sufficient to enable those saints who

are *low in grace*, have very much departed from God, or are fallen into a carnal and unchristian frame of mind, to discern with certainty the goodness of their state. It is not agreeable to the designs of God, neither is it desirable, that such persons should know their state to be good. We have reason to bless God that he has made no provision for the attainment of such knowledge, in any other way than by a change of frame and of conduct.

Indeed, it is not properly through any defect in the criterions given us in the Scriptures, that every saint—he who is in the worst frame, as well as others,—cannot with certainty know the goodness of his state. For the rules are infallible, and every saint has those things in himself, which are sure marks of grace:—even the weakest act of grace is such. It is through the defect of him to whom these criterions are applied, that this knowledge cannot be attained. There is a twofold defect in that saint who is very low in grace, or in a bad frame of mind, which renders it impossible for him to know that he possesses true grace, even by the best rules that can be proposed.

(1.) A defect in the object, or the evidence to be examined. I do not mean a ruinous deficiency, because I suppose the person of whom I am speaking to be a real saint; but a partial defect—a very small degree of grace, which cannot be clearly perceived. We cannot clearly discern the form of those things which are very small; nor can we distinguish them one from another, though they are very different. There is, doubtless, a great difference between the body of man and the bodies of other animals; though, if we should view the embryos of each, owing to the imperfect state of the object, it might not be possible for us to perceive that

difference. As they arrived at greater perfection, distinguishing characteristics would become more evident. Another defect attending the grace of those of whom I am speaking, is its being mixed with so much depravity, which obscures or hides it. Though different objects which are before us, may possess many characteristic marks; yet, if we see them only in a thick fog, it may still be impossible for us to distinguish one from another. When true Christians are in a bad frame, guilt lies on the conscience; this produces fear, and in consequence prevents the peace and joy which arise from the assurance of hope.

(2.) There is in this case a defect in the perceptive faculty. As the prevalence of corruption obscures the object, so it enfeebles the sight. Sin is like some distempers of the eye, which present things in different colors from those which properly belongs to them. Men, in a bad frame of mind, have their spiritual perception in an unfavorable condition for distinguishing spiritual objects.

For these reasons, no criterion that can be given will be satisfactory in such a state as this. In these circumstances, to point out characteristic marks, is like giving rules to distinguish distant objects in the dark. Many persons, in cases of this nature, waste their time in poring over past experience, and examining themselves by evidences proposed from the pulpit, or of which they read in books; when, in fact, there is other work for them to do, without which all their self-examination is in vain. The accursed thing is to be removed from their camp; Achan is to be slain, and until this is done they *must* be in darkness and trouble. It is not the design of God that men should obtain assurance in any other way than by mortifying depraved

inclinations, and by growing in the lively exercise of grace. Though self examination is a duty of great importance, and by no means to be neglected; yet it is not the principal means by which the saints obtain satisfaction as to their interest in the favor of God. Assurance is not to be obtained so much by self examination, as by active piety. The Apostle Paul sought assurance chiefly in this way: by forgetting the things which were behind, and reaching forth unto those things which were before, pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; if by any means he might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. It was by this means chiefly that he obtained assurance: "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly." 1 Cor. 9: 26. Giving all diligence, by adding to faith virtue, &c. is the direction which the Apostle Peter gives us for "making our calling and election sure," and having an entrance ministered to us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of Christ.

Without this we shall be in spiritual darkness: unable to perceive either the pardon of our sins, as it respects the present; or our interest in the heavenly inheritance, as it respects the future. 2 Pet. 1: 5--11.

Though good rules for distinguishing true grace from counterfeit may tend to convince hypocrites, and be of great use to the saints in removing needless doubts; yet I am far from professing to lay down such rules as shall be sufficient of themselves to enable all true saints to know the goodness of their state, or afford them the principal means of their satisfaction.

Observation III. Nor do the occurrences of the past, or the present times, afford much encouragement in laying down rules for distinguishing between true and false affection, with a view of *convincing those hypo-*

crites who are deceived by great, but false discoveries and affections. Such hypocrites are so confident of their own wisdom, and so blinded and hardened by self-righteousness under the guise of humility, that to lay before them the most convincing evidence of their hypocrisy, is, in general, in vain. Their state is indeed deplorable, nearly approaching the situation of those who have committed the unpardonable sin. Such professors seem to be most out of the reach of the means of conviction and repentance. Still, however, good rules may be a means of deterring others from such hypocrisy, and convincing some who are self-deceived. God is able to convince even the worst kind of hypocrites; and his grace is not to be limited, nor are means to be neglected. And besides, such rules may be of service to the real saints, in detecting false affections, which are sometimes mixed with true ones; and in being a means of purifying their religion.

Having premised these things, I proceed directly to take notice of those circumstances by which true religious affections are distinguished from false ones.

I. Truly gracious affections are produced by a *supernatural, spiritual, and divine influence* on the heart.

I will explain what I mean by these terms. We find that real saints, or those persons who are sanctified by the Spirit of God, are, in the New Testament, called spiritual persons; and their being spiritual is spoken of, as their peculiar character, and that wherein they are distinguished from those who are not sanctified. Those who are spiritual are set in opposition to those

who are carnal, or natural, that is, in a state of nature. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual, judgeth all things." 1 Cor. 2 : 14, 15. By a natural man the Scriptures mean an ungodly man. The Apostle Jude, speaking of certain ungodly men, who had crept in unawares among the saints, calls them "sensual, not having the Spirit," verse 19. He assigns this as the reason why they behaved themselves in so wicked a manner. The word translated sensual in this passage is *ψυχικοί*; which in several verses in 1 Cor. chap. 2, is translated natural. In like manner, in the next verse but one, spiritual men are set in opposition to carnal men; by which terms we are to understand the same as by spiritual men and natural men in the preceding verses: "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal," that is, as in a great measure unsanctified. That by the term carnal, the apostle means unsanctified, is abundantly evident from Rom. 7 : 25; 8 : 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13. Gal. 5 : 16, &c. Col. 2 : 18. If therefore, by the terms natural and carnal, in these texts, is meant unsanctified; then, undoubtedly, by the term spiritual, which stands opposed to them, is meant sanctified and gracious.

And as the saints are called spiritual in Scripture, so there are certain properties, qualities and privileges, which have the same denomination. We read of a spiritual mind, Rom. 8 : 6; of spiritual wisdom, Col. 1 : 9; and of spiritual blessings, Eph. 1 : 3.

It may be observed, that the word spiritual, in these and other texts of the New Testament, is not used to signify any relation to the spirit, or soul of man, in

opposition to the body. Qualities are not said to be spiritual, because they have their seat in the soul; for there are some properties which the Scriptures call carnal, which have their seat as much in the soul as those properties which are called spiritual. This is the case with pride, and self-righteousness, and confidence in our own wisdom, which the apostle calls fleshly. Col. 2 : 18.

Nor are qualities, &c. denominated spiritual, because they relate to things which are immaterial. The heathen philosophers were accustomed to speculate about spirits and immaterial beings. Notwithstanding this the apostle represents them as carnal men, totally ignorant of those things which are spiritual. 1 Cor. chap. 2. But it is in relation to the Spirit of God that persons and qualities are termed spiritual in the New Testament. The word Spirit, as used to signify the third person in the Trinity, is the substantive, from which is formed the adjective spiritual, in the Holy Scriptures. Christians, therefore, are denominated spiritual, because they are born of the Spirit of God, and because they are under the gracious influence of that Spirit. Things are also called spiritual as they stand related to the Spirit of God: "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. 1 Cor. 2 : 13, 14. Again: "To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Rom. 8 : 6. In the ninth verse the apostle explains what he means by the terms carnally and spiritually minded. He shows that by the latter he means our being under the gracious in-

fluence of the Spirit of God: "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." "Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." That this is the meaning of the apostle, is evident from the whole of the context.

But it must be observed here, that although it is with relation to the Spirit of God and his influences that persons and things are in the New Testament called spiritual, yet not all persons who are under any kind of influence of the Holy Spirit are called spiritual. They who have only the common influences of the Spirit are not so called. Natural men, whatever extraordinary gifts they had, are not, in general, in the New Testament, called spiritual. For it was not from having the gifts, but the graces of the Spirit, that men were called spiritual: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye" who "are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness." Gal. 6 : 1. Meekness is one of those virtues of which the apostle had been speaking in showing what the fruits of the Spirit are. In the language of the New Testament those properties or qualities are said to be spiritual, which are truly gracious and holy, and peculiar to the saints: "We desire that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Col. 1 : 9. By the terms wisdom, and spiritual understanding, in this passage, is intended that wisdom which is gracious, and from the sanctifying influence of the Spirit of God. Spiritual wisdom is opposed to natural wisdom, as the spiritual man is opposed to the natural man; and therefore spiritual wisdom is the same as that wisdom which is from above. James, 3 : 17. This the apostle opposes to natural wisdom—a wisdom which descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sen-

sual, and devilish, verse 15. In this passage, the word translated sensual is, in the original, the same as that which is translated natural in 1 Cor. 2 : 14.

So that though natural men may be the subjects of a certain kind of Divine influence, as is evident from many parts of Scripture, particularly from Num. 24 : 2 ; 1 Sam. 10 : 10 ; 11 : 6 ; 16 : 14 ; 1 Cor. 13 : 1, 2, 3 ; Heb. 6 : 4, 5, 6, &c. ; yet they are not, in the sense of Scripture, spiritual persons ; neither are any of those effects, gifts, qualities, or affections, which they derive from the influence of the Spirit of God, called spiritual. The great difference lies in the two following particulars :

(1.) The Spirit of God is given to the saints to *dwell* in them, as his proper and continued abode ; to animate and influence their minds as a principle of life and action. The Scriptures represent the Holy Spirit as not only occasionally influencing the saints, but as abiding in them, as his temple and everlasting dwelling place. 1 Cor. 3 : 16 ; 2 Cor. 6 : 16 ; John, 14 : 16, 17. He is represented as being so united to the faculties of the soul as to become the principle of a new nature and life. He is a fountain and well of water in the soul, springing up into spiritual and everlasting life. John, 4 : 14. This living water the evangelist himself explains as intending the Spirit of God, 7 : 38, 39. The Spirit of God being thus communicated and united to the saints, they are from thence properly denominated spiritual.

On the other hand, though the Spirit of God may influence natural men, yet, as he is not communicated to them as an indwelling principle, they do not derive any denomination or character from that circumstance.

(2.) Another, and the principal reason why the

saints and their virtues are called spiritual, is this ; the Spirit of God, dwelling in them as a vital principle, communicates himself to them *in his own proper nature*. Holiness is the nature of the Spirit of God, therefore he is called in the Scriptures the Holy Spirit. Holiness, which is the beauty of the Divine Being, is as much the proper nature of the Holy Spirit, as heat is the nature of fire. The grace which is in the hearts of the saints, though infinitely less, is of the same nature as the divine holiness. "That which is born of the Spirit," says the Redeemer, "is spirit." John, 3 : 6. The principle which is produced in the hearts of the saints, is of the same nature as that Spirit, and so is properly called spiritual.

But the Spirit of God never influences the minds of natural men in this way. He never communicates himself to them in his own proper nature. He never indeed acts contrary to his nature, either on the minds of saints or of sinners ; but he may act upon men agreeably to his own nature, and not at all communicate himself to them.

The relation of the Spirit to the subjects of his operation, is not only different from every thing that can be experienced by an unregenerate man, but the operation itself is different, and its effects exceedingly so. The saints are not only called spiritual, as having the Spirit dwelling in them ; but the effects of divine influence upon their minds are also spiritual, and therefore cannot be experienced by an unregenerate man. This is a spiritual work in the highest sense of the word ; and is therefore, above all other works, peculiar to the Spirit of God. There is no other work so excellent as this ; for there is none in which God so communicates himself, and in which the creature has,

in so high a sense, a participation of God, as in this. Hence the saints are represented as "being made partakers of the divine nature," as being "the temples of the living God." 2 Peter, 1 : 4, and 2 Cor. 6 : 16. See also 1 John, 3 : 24 ; 4 : 12, 15, 16. John, 17 : 21, 23, 26 ; Rom. 8 : 10 ; Heb. 12 : 10 ; 1 John, 1 : 3. Not that the saints are made partakers of the essence of God, according to the blasphemous notions and language of some heretics ; but, to use a Scripture phrase, they are made partakers of his *fullness*, that is, of his moral beauty. Grace in the hearts of the saints being, therefore, that work of God in which he communicates the holiness of his nature, it is doubtless his peculiar work, and in an eminent degree above the power of any creature. The influence of the Spirit of God, thus communicating himself and making the creature a partaker of the divine nature, is what I mean by truly gracious affections arising from spiritual and divine influence.

None but real saints possess that experience which is truly spiritual. Others not only possess not those communications of the Spirit of God in so high a degree as the saints, but they possess nothing of the same nature and kind. The Apostle James tells us, that natural men have not the Spirit ; and Christ urges the necessity of a new birth, or a being born of the Spirit, because he that is born of the flesh is flesh. John, 3 : 6. The unregenerate have not the Spirit of God dwelling in them in any degree ; for the apostle declares, that all who have the Spirit of God dwelling in them are sons of God. Rom. 8 : 9-11. Having the Spirit of God is mentioned as the earnest of the everlasting inheritance. 2 Cor. 1 : 22, and 5 : 5 ; Eph. 1 : 13, 14. It is a sure evidence of our being in Christ :

“Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.” 1 John, 4 : 13. Ungodly men are not partakers of the divine nature, for partaking of the divine nature is mentioned as the peculiar privilege of real saints. 2 Peter, 1 : 4. They are not partakers of the holiness of God. Heb. 12 : 10. A natural man has no experience of any thing spiritual, for the apostle assures us that he is a perfect stranger to every thing of this kind: “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” 1 Cor. 2 : 14. To the same purpose the Lord Jesus Christ tells us that the world is wholly unacquainted with the Spirit of God: “Even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him.” John, 14 : 17. It is farther evident that unregenerate men possess nothing of the nature of real grace; for the apostle declares, that those of them who proceed farthest in religion, have no charity, or true Christian love. 1 Cor. 13. So Christ reproves the Pharisees, those high pretenders to religion, for not having the love of God in them, John, 5 : 42. Hence natural men have no communion or fellowship with Christ, for this is mentioned as the peculiar privilege of the saints. 1 John, 1 : 3, 6, 7; 1 Cor. 1 : 9. The Scriptures speak of a gracious principle in the soul, though small as a grain of mustard seed, as inconsistent with a state of sin. 1 John, 3 : 9. Natural men are represented in the sacred writings as having no spiritual light, no spiritual life, no spiritual being; and therefore regeneration is often compared to the opening of the eyes of the blind, to the raising of the dead, and to the work of creation.

From these things it is evident, that those gracious influences of which the saints are the subjects, and which are the effects of the Spirit of God, are altogether supernatural—are quite different from any thing that unregenerate men experience. They are what no improvement, or composition of natural qualifications or principles will ever produce; because they not only differ from what is natural, and from every thing that natural men experience in degree and circumstances, but also in kind; and are of a nature far more excellent. And this is what I mean by supernatural, when I say that gracious affections proceed from supernatural influence.

From hence it follows, that in gracious affections there are new perceptions and sensations entirely different in their nature and kind from any thing experienced by the saints before they were sanctified. For if God, by his gracious influence, produces something that is new, not only in degree and circumstances, but in the whole of its nature, and that which could be produced by no exaltation or composition of what was possessed before, or by the addition of any thing of the same kind—if God produces something thus new in the mind; then doubtless something entirely new is felt, or perceived, or thought; or, which is the same thing, there is some perception or sensation of the mind of an entirely new description.

This new spiritual sense, and the new dispositions which attend it, are not however new faculties, but new principles. By a principle, I mean that foundation which is laid for any particular kind of exercise of the faculties of the soul. So that this new spiritual sense is not a new faculty of the understanding, but a foundation laid in the soul for a new kind of exercise of that faculty.

The Spirit of God, in his common operations upon the minds of natural men, only moves, impresses, assists, improves, or in some other way acts upon natural principles. He may greatly assist natural men in their reasonings about secular things, and even about the doctrines of religion, without giving them any spiritual sense; and may assist their conscience to perform that work more fully, which it performs naturally. There are many other ways in which the Holy Spirit acts upon, assists and moves natural principles, where there is nothing supernatural and divine. But the Spirit of God, *in his gracious influence*, operates by infusing or exercising new supernatural principles—principles vastly more important and excellent than any thing experienced or possessed by natural men.

From what has been said it follows, that all spiritual and gracious affections arise from, and are attended by some apprehension, idea, or sensation of mind, exceedingly different from all that can be possessed or experienced by natural men—something of which they can form no adequate conception.

But here two things must be noticed, in order that this may be rightly understood.

(1.) On the one hand, it must be observed, that not every thing *belonging* to spiritual affections is new, and entirely different from what natural men may conceive of and experience. Many circumstances, appendages and effects, are common to both natural and spiritual affections. Thus love to a near relation, and love to God, have many attending circumstances exactly similar: love to God produces a desire to please the object beloved; so does love to a near relation: love to God causes a man to delight in thinking of

God, and in conformity to the will of God; exactly similar are the effects of that love which one man may bear to another. But yet the conceptions which the saints have of the loveliness of God, and that kind of delight in him which they experience, are quite peculiar, and entirely different from any thing which a natural man can possess, or of which he can form any proper notion. And even in those circumstances which seem to be common, there is something peculiar; both spiritual and natural love produce desires after the object beloved; but they are not the same kind of desires: there is a sensation of soul in spiritual desires which is very different from all natural desires. Both spiritual and natural love are attended by delight in the object beloved; but the sensations of delight are not the same, but exceedingly different. Natural men may have conceptions of many things about spiritual affections; but still there is something in them of which they can form no proper notion.

(2.) On the other hand, a natural man may have religious apprehensions and affections which, in many respects, are quite *new* to him; and yet what he experiences may not be the exercise of a new principle, nor the sensations of a new spiritual apprehension. His affections may be quite new, through the influence of natural principles, arising from some powerful influence of Satan, or some kind of strong delusion.

Upon the whole, I think it clearly evident, that all truly gracious affections arise from the *special and peculiar influences of the Holy Spirit*; producing those sensible effects in the souls of the saints which are entirely different from all that a natural man can possibly experience, not only in degree and circumstances, but in the whole of their nature. A natural man not

only cannot experience that which is exactly the same, but he cannot experience any thing but what is exceedingly different, and immensely inferior.

I have insisted largely on this matter, because it is of great importance, in order to discover and exhibit the delusions of Satan in various kinds of false religious affections, by which many persons are deluded; and in order to determine and settle many points of doctrine respecting the operations of the Spirit of God, and the nature of true grace.

I therefore now come to apply these things to the purpose of this discourse.

From hence it appears, that the impressions which are made *on the imaginations* of some persons, or the conceptions which they have of God, of heaven, and of other things belonging to religion, possess nothing truly spiritual, of the nature of real grace. Though what is spiritual may attend such impressions, and be mixed with them; yet in themselves they possess nothing that is spiritual, nor are they any part of gracious experience.

Many persons who have had powerful impressions upon the imagination, have very ignorantly supposed them to be of the nature of spiritual discoveries. They have had lively ideas of some well proportioned figure or beautiful form of countenance; and this they call a spiritual sight of Christ. Some have had impressed upon their minds the idea of a great light; and this they call a spiritual view of the glory of God. Some have been impressed with an idea of Christ hanging on the cross, and of his blood flowing from his wounds; and this they call a spiritual sight of Christ, and of the way of salvation. Some have imagined that they saw him with his arms extended, ready to embrace them;

and this they call a spiritual discovery of the sufficiency of his grace, and a certain proof that he loves them. Some have had lively ideas of heaven, and of Christ on his throne there, surrounded by saints and angels; and this they call a spiritual view of heaven. And in like manner, the imaginations of some persons have been impressed with ideas of hearing. They have imagined that Christ was speaking to them in the language of comfort and encouragement. These things they have denominated the inward call of Christ, having the witness of the Spirit, a testimony of the favor of God, &c.

Persons of little information, and who are not accustomed to reflect, more readily conclude that these things are spiritual, because spiritual things being invisible, we are obliged to use *figurative expressions* in speaking of them. Thus we call a clear apprehension of spiritual things by the name of *light*; and the conviction of the judgment, and the persuasion of the will, when produced by the word and Spirit of God, we denominate spiritually *hearing the call* of Christ. Some persons upon hearing these expressions often used, and having the necessity of their eyes being opened, of their having a discovery of spiritual things, &c. urged upon them, ignorantly expect some such discoveries and views as have been spoken of; and when these are obtained, they are confident that their eyes are now opened, that Christ has now manifested himself to them as their Savior; and hence they are exceedingly affected by their supposed deliverance and privileges, and thus many kinds of affections are immediately and powerfully excited.

But it is very evident that such discoveries have nothing in them really spiritual and divine: they are in no respect of such a kind as to be entirely, and in the

whole of their nature, different from all that natural men can possibly experience, so that in order to possess them, we must have a new spiritual and divine principle communicated. A natural man is as capable of having a lively idea of shapes, and colors, and sounds, in reference to absent objects, impressed upon his mind, as a regenerate man. And it is ascertained by abundant experience, that it is not from mental cultivation that persons are rendered more liable to such lively ideas ; but that, on the contrary, the weakness of the body and of the mind conduces very much to this susceptibility.

These ideas, though the manner in which they are impressed is sometimes extraordinary, are no better on that account : they are still not of a different kind from what men obtain by their senses. For instance, the conception which an unregenerate man has of Christ hanging on the cross and shedding his blood, is no better in itself than the conceptions which the Jews, his enemies, had, who stood round his cross, and witnessed his crucifixion. Yea, if men should actually receive such ideas by the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit, unaccompanied by a gracious change of disposition, they would not be spiritual, they would be nothing more than the common work of the Spirit of God. Balaam had impressed on his mind, by divine influence, a clear and lively representation or idea of Jesus Christ, as the star rising out of Jacob, when he heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the Most High, and saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance. Numb. 24 : 16, 17. Notwithstanding this he had no spiritual discovery of Christ; that Day-star never spiritually arose in his heart.

And as these ideas have nothing spiritual in their

nature, nothing but what natural men, without any new principles, are capable of—so there is nothing in their nature which requires that gracious influence of the Spirit of God which is necessary to the production of true grace. There appears nothing in them above the power of Satan. The Devil can no doubt suggest ideas, otherwise he could not tempt men to sin. They may be raised merely by impressions made on the body, by moving the animal spirits, and impressing the brain. Experience abundantly shows that changes in the body often exert a palpable effect upon the mind.

But it is also evident that the devil not only can, but that he often has excited such ideas. This appears from the dreams and visions of the false prophets of old, who were under the influence of lying spirits. See Deut. 13 : 1 ; 1 Kings, 22 : 22 ; Isaiah, 28 : 7 ; Ezek. 13 : 7 ; Zech. 13 : 4. And if Satan, or any created being has power to impress the mind with ideal representations, then no particular kind of such representations can be any evidence of a divine and gracious influence, for no higher kind of power is required to form in the brain one shape or color than another. It is evident therefore, that if it is in the power of the Devil to produce any kind of impression on the imagination, he may produce all kinds.

From hence it also appears that nothing of this kind is spiritual and divine, in the sense in which it has been proved that all gracious experience is. And though, in some degree, such ideas attend gracious experience, yet they are no part of that experience. Owing to our infirmities in the present state, and especially to the weak constitution of some persons, gracious affections, when very strong, undoubtedly excite lively ideas in

the imagination ; yet it is also true, that when affections arise wholly from imagination, which is often the case, they are merely natural—they are built on a foundation which is not spiritual, and so are entirely different from gracious affections.

These impressions on the imagination often raise the carnal affections of men to a very great height : and no wonder, as the persons thus deluded are firmly persuaded of their being divine manifestations, which the great JEHOVAH makes to their souls ; thus giving testimony, in an extraordinary manner, as to their special interest in his gracious favor.

Again, it is evident, from what has been said respecting gracious operations on the heart of man, that the act of impressing the words of Scripture on the mind has nothing in it spiritual and divine. I have had occasion to say something of this already, and if the reader bears in mind what has been advanced concerning the nature of spiritual influence, it will be abundantly evident to him that this is not a spiritual and gracious operation. For I suppose that no person of common understanding will say or imagine, that there are words which cannot be impressed upon the mind of a natural man.

Suggesting the words of Scripture to the mind is only exciting ideas of certain sounds or letters ; and therefore, from what has been already said, it is evident that in such suggestions there may be nothing spiritual. But let it be well observed, that when the *extraordinary manner* in which the words of Scripture are suggested to the mind, is that which excites our warm affections, and is properly the ground of them, then those affections are certainly not spiritual. Persons may have gracious affections attending Scripture pas-

sages, thus brought to their minds, and the Spirit of God may make use of Scripture to excite them. In this case, it is the divine and excellent things contained in those Scriptures, which excite their affections, and not the extraordinary and sudden manner in which they are suggested. Such persons are affected by the instruction they receive from the words, and the view of the glorious things of God which they exhibit, and not by their coming suddenly to their minds, as though they had been spoken to them. Persons are often exceedingly affected in this way: the words of some great and precious promise of Scripture come suddenly to their minds, and they regard them as directed immediately to them from the Holy Spirit himself. This they take to be the voice of God, revealing to them their happy circumstances. There is no spiritual knowledge as to the meaning of these passages, preceding their engaged affections as the foundation of them: all the knowledge they have as the foundation of these affections is this—the words they think were spoken to them, because they came so suddenly, and in so extraordinary a manner. And their supposed religious affections are built wholly on the sand, and rest on a conclusion for which they have no foundation; for as it has been already shown, the sudden manner in which words may come to the mind, is no evidence that they are a suggestion from God. And even if we knew that God brought words to our minds, *that* might be without our having spiritual knowledge. Balaam might know that the words which were suggested to him, were suggested by God; yet he possessed no spiritual and gracious illumination. Persons who have their affections thus raised, if they should be inquired of, whether they have any clearer views of the

excellency of the things contained in those Scriptures, would probably say, Yes, without hesitation; though they have no such views, except in the following respect: when they have adopted the notion that the words are spoken immediately to themselves, that circumstance makes those passages appear precious to them, and in consequence they regard what those Scriptures say to them as being excellent and highly important. For instance, suppose these words were suddenly brought to their minds, "Fear not—it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Having adopted a confident persuasion that the words are spoken to them immediately; that God is their Father, and hath given to them the kingdom of heaven, they are greatly affected, and this passage becomes precious to them. But the reason why this promise appears so important to them, is merely because they think it is made to *themselves immediately*. All the impression they have of any glory in it arises from self-love, and from their imagined interest in what is promised. They have no view of the holy nature of the kingdom of heaven, the spiritual glory of God, and his abundant grace to sinners in giving them this kingdom. On the contrary, they first imagine that they are interested, and then they are highly affected, and afterward they regard these things as excellent and precious. So that the sudden and extraordinary manner in which passages of Scripture come to their minds, is evidently the foundation of the whole; and this is a clear proof of the wretched delusion by which they are deceived.

The first religious comfort of many persons, and what they call their conversion, is of the same kind. After conviction and terrors, some encouraging pro-

mise is suddenly and unaccountably suggested to their minds; and the manner in which it is suggested leads them to conclude that it certainly proceeds from God. This is the foundation of their faith, and hope, and comfort. From hence they take their first encouragement to trust in God. But every person tolerably acquainted with the principles of religion, must know that God reveals his love to men, and their interest in his promises *after*, and not *before* they believe. They must believe before they can realize an interest in the promises. The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of truth, and therefore he does not suggest Scripture to the minds of men in order to reveal to them that they have an interest in the favor of God and his promises, when they have none, not having yet believed. No promise of the covenant of grace belongs to any man until he has believed in Christ; for it is only by faith that we become interested in Christ, and in the promises of the new covenant; and therefore whatever spirit applies the promises of that covenant to a person who does not believe, must be a lying spirit; and the faith which is built upon such an application has in fact no Scripture foundation to rest upon. The Spirit of God does not suggest comfortable texts of Scripture in order to assure us of his love, while we have not the faith of dependence. And even if a promise is properly applied as an invitation; yet if we make the sudden and unusual manner of its being suggested, the ground on which we believe that we are invited, our persuasion is not true faith, because it is built on that which is not the ground of true faith. The only reason we have to infer that we are invited to partake of the blessings of the Gospel is this, the word of God declares, that persons qualified as we are, are invited,

and God, who makes the declaration, cannot lie. If a sinner, feeling that he is such, is convinced of the veracity of God, and that the Scriptures are his word, he will need nothing more to satisfy him that he is invited; for they abound with invitations to sinners, even to the chief of sinners, to come and partake of the benefits of the Gospel. Possessing such views and feelings, he will want no new revelation.

As the religious comfort of many professors, at the time of their supposed conversion, springs from those sources which have been mentioned, so do their hopes, and joys, and other affections, at subsequent stages of their experience. They have often particular words of Scripture—gracious declarations and promises suggested to their minds, which, in consequence of the manner in which they are suggested, they conclude are immediately sent from God. This circumstance they actually make the chief ground of the confidence and comfort they receive from them. They imagine a kind of conversation carried on between God and themselves; and that, by the Scriptures which come to their minds, he speaks to them, satisfies their doubts, promises them support, and reveals to them clearly their interest in everlasting blessings. And thus they are often elevated, and have a kind of sudden and tumultuous joy, mingled with strong confidence, and a high opinion of themselves; when indeed the main ground of this confidence and this joy is not any thing contained in the Scriptures, or taught by them, but the *suddenness* with which particular passages are suggested to their minds. There is no particular promise in the word of God, spoken to any individual saint, or made his in any other way than as all the promises of the covenant of grace are his, and spoken to him

though it is undoubtedly true, that some of the promises may be more adapted to his case than to the case of others; and God, by his Spirit, may enable him more fully to understand some than others, and may give him a deeper sense of the preciousness and suitableness of the blessings contained in them.

But is there no such thing then as a particular, spiritual application of the promises of Scripture by the Spirit of God? I answer, there undoubtedly is; but it is also certain that the nature of it is wholly misunderstood by many persons, so that they deceive themselves, and give Satan great advantage against them, and against the interests of religion. The spiritual application of a scripture promise, does not consist in its being immediately suggested to the mind, accompanied by a very strong persuasion that it is spoken particularly to the individual himself in reference to his own state. There is no evidence of the hand of God in any thing of this kind, as events have shown, with respect to many professors. There is nothing in this at all beyond the power of Satan; nor any thing implying a vital communication from God. A truly spiritual application of the word of God is of a vastly superior nature; as much above the power of the Devil, as it is to apply the word of God to a dead man so as to raise him to life. It consists in applying it to the heart in its enlightening, sanctifying influence. A spiritual application of a promise consists in enlightening the mind to see the holy excellency of the blessings promised, and the faithfulness and sufficiency of him who promises; thus drawing forth the heart to embrace the blessings promised, and to adore the promiser; and by this means producing the sensible operations of grace, and the evidence of interest in

the blessings promised. An application not consisting in these things, but only in certain words borne into the mind in a direct way, as if spoken; making persons believe, on this foundation alone, that the promise is theirs, is a delusive application, performed by the spirit of darkness, and not by the Spirit of light.

Here it may be proper to observe, that what many persons call the *witness of the Spirit* that they are the children of God, has nothing in it spiritual and divine; and consequently the affections built upon it are false and delusive. That which they call the witness of the Spirit, is nothing more than an immediate suggestion, by which they are assured of their being converted, or made the children of God, and from which they derive the persuasion that their sins are pardoned, and that God has given them a title to heaven. This assurance requires no higher kind of suggestion, in order to impress it on the mind, than that by which the mind of Balaam was impressed. It requires no higher kind of agency for a man to have the persuasion of his own conversion impressed upon his mind, than to have the persuasion of his neighbor's conversion impressed upon his mind; and God, if he pleased, could impart this knowledge, as well as any other, without any communication of his holiness.

But it is a low notion of the witness of the Spirit to suppose, that there is nothing in the nature of that influence by which it is imparted but what may be experienced by natural men, or of which men are capable, who are at the same time altogether unsanctified; and that therefore the gift itself possesses nothing of the holy nature of the Spirit of God, nothing of a vital communication of that Spirit. That which is called the witness of the Spirit, in Rom. 8 : 15, 16, is

called the seal of the Spirit in 2 Cor. 1 . 22 ; Eph. 1 : 13, and 4 : 30, in allusion to the seal of princes, annexed, as a token of special regard, to certain instruments, by which they advance their favorites to some high honor or peculiar privilege. Thus the sealing of his favorites by the Prince of princes, is far from being a common operation : there is no work of the Spirit of God whatever, which in its nature, is more holy, peculiar, inimitable, and characteristic of divinity. The seal of the King of heaven stamped on the heart, is in its very nature a holy communication, and not merely the revelation of an important fact. The seal of the Spirit is a work of God on the heart, of which natural men are so far from being the subjects that they can form no conception of it. "To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it." Rev. 2 : 17. There is reason to suppose that what is here spoken of is the same mark, evidence, or blessed token of special favor, which is elsewhere called the seal of the Spirit.

What has misled many persons in their notions of that influence of the Spirit of God, of which we are speaking, is the word WITNESS. This blessing has been regarded, not as a holy effect, or work of the Spirit upon the human heart, from whence we may argue that we are the children of God, but as an immediate, inward suggestion, as though God, by a kind of voice or impression, informed us that we were his children. This mistake arises from not observing the sense in which the word witness, or testimony, is often used in the New Testament. These terms, as used in the places alluded to, do not signify a direct declara-

tion, or assertion as to the truth of any proposition, but that evidence, or those premises from whence the truth of such proposition may be inferred. God is said to "bear witness with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost." Heb. 2 : 4. Now these miracles are not denominated witnesses, because they are of the nature of assertions, or direct testimony, but as they afford evidence or rational ground for indubitable inference. "Long time therefore abode they, speaking boldly in the Lord," who "gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands." Acts, 14 : 3. "But I have greater witness than that of John, for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me." John, 5 : 36. "The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." John, 10 : 25. In the same sense the works of Divine Providence, as the giving of rain and fruitful seasons, are mentioned as proofs of the being and goodness of God. And when the sacred writings speak of the seal of the Spirit, the expression properly denotes, not an immediate suggestion or voice, but some work or effect of the Spirit, which leaves a divine mark upon the soul as an evidence by which the children of God may be known. When God puts his seal upon a man's soul there is some holy stamp—some image impressed and left there like the impress of the seal upon the wax. And this holy stamp, or impressed image, exhibiting clear evidence to the mind that the subject of it is a child of God, is what the Scriptures call the seal, the witness or evidence of the Spirit. This image stamped by the Spirit on the hearts of the children of God, is his own image, and is the

evidence by which they are known to be his children. Seals had anciently engraven on them two things, the *image* and the *name* of the person to whom they belonged. And therefore when Christ says to his spouse, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm;" it is as much as to say, let my *name* and my *image* remain impressed there.

Another proof that the seal or witness of the Spirit is not a revelation by immediate suggestion, but divine grace communicated to the soul, is, that this seal is called the "earnest of the Spirit." "Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." 2 Cor. 1 : 22. "In whom, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." Eph. 1 : 13, 14. Now the earnest is part of the purchase money given in hand to insure the payment of the whole : a part of the inheritance given to insure the possession of the whole at some future period. But surely that communication which is of the nature of eternal felicity, must be the most excellent kind of communication—something that is in its own nature spiritual, holy and divine ; and therefore far above any thing of the nature of inspiration, or revelation by the suggestions of the Spirit of God. What is the earnest or beginning of glory, but grace, especially in its more lively and manifest exercises ? It is not prophecy, nor tongues, nor knowledge, but that more excellent, divine gift, "charity," or love, "that never faileth," a prelibation of the light and blessedness of heaven, that world of love. Grace is the seed of glory in the heart, and therefore the earnest of the future inheritance. What is the beginning of eternal life in

the soul, but spiritual life? and what is spiritual life but grace? The inheritance that Christ has purchased for his people, is the Spirit of God; not in any extraordinary gifts, but in his vital indwelling in the heart, communicating and exerting himself there in his own proper, holy and divine nature. It is through the vital communications and indwelling of the Spirit, that the saints have all their life, light, holiness, beauty and joy in heaven; and it is through the same communications and indwelling, that the saints have all their life, light, holiness, beauty and comfort on earth.

And indeed when the apostle, in Rom. 8 : 16, speaks of the Spirit bearing "witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God," he sufficiently explains himself, if his words were but properly attended to. This verse is connected with the two verses immediately preceding, and forms an inference from what the apostle had there said, as every attentive reader will easily perceive. The three verses are as follows: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God; for ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father; the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God." What the apostle says here, if we take it in connection, clearly shows, that when he mentions the Spirit as giving evidence, or bearing witness that we are the children of God, he has respect to his dwelling in us, and leading us as the spirit of adoption, or as the spirit of a child, disposing us to behave toward God as to a father. This is the witness, or evidence, of which the apostle speaks; and thus, if we are children, we have the spirit of children, or the spirit of adoption. And what is that but the spirit of love? There are two

kinds of spirits of which the apostle speaks, the spirit of a slave, or of bondage, and that is *fear*; and the spirit of a child, or of adoption, and that is *love*. The apostle says we have not received the spirit of bondage, or of slaves, which is a spirit of fear; but we have received the spirit of children—the spirit of love, which naturally inclines us to approach God, and to behave toward him as children to a father. And this is the witness of the Spirit, or the evidence given us that we are the children of God. This is the obvious meaning of the apostle, and undoubtedly he is here speaking of the same way of casting out doubts and fears and the spirit of bondage, as that of which the Apostle John speaks, 1 Epistle, 4 : 18, that is, by the prevalence of love, or a child-like spirit. The spirit of bondage works by fear: the slave fears the rod: but love cries, Abba, Father. It gives us clear evidence of our union to God as his children, and so casts out fear. Hence it appears that the witness of the Spirit, of which the apostle speaks, is not any immediate suggestion or revelation, but a gracious and holy work of the Spirit of God in the hearts of the saints, producing the dispositions and temper of children. It is a humble, child-like affection to God, casting out fear, or the servile spirit of bondage.

This is evident from the context: the apostle repeatedly mentions the Spirit as dwelling in the hearts of the saints, as a gracious principle, opposed to the flesh, or depraved nature. In the words which introduce this passage, he says, “For, if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the flesh, ye shall live.” Verse 13. I have no doubt but that the apostle has a particular view to the spirit of grace, or the spirit of love, in its more

lively actings; for it is perfect, or strong love only, which so testifies, or so gives evidence that we are his children, as to cast out fear, and to deliver us from the spirit of bondage. The strong and lively exercises of a spirit of child-like, evangelical, humble love to God, give clear evidence of our relation to God as his children. Possessing this spirit, the saint has no need of numerous evidences, or a long train of reasoning upon them. The union between his soul and God is so strong and lively that all doubts are removed.

The apostle says the Spirit bears witness with our spirits. By the term "our spirits" here, is meant our consciences: "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord." Prov. 20 : 27. "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience." 2 Cor. 1 : 12. "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." 1 John, 3 : 21. When the Apostle Paul mentions the Spirit of God as bearing witness with our spirits, he is not to be understood as speaking of two separate, independent witnesses. It is by the latter that we receive the witness of the former: the Spirit of God gives evidence, by infusing and shedding abroad the love of God, the spirit of a child, in the heart; and our spirits, or consciences, receive and declare this evidence.

Great mischief has arisen from the false and delusive notion, that the witness of the Spirit is a kind of inward suggestion, or declaration from God, assuring us that we are beloved, pardoned, &c.; and many souls, I fear, have been eternally ruined by this delusion. I have therefore insisted the longer on this head.

II. Another characteristic of gracious affections is, that divine things are regarded as *transcendently excellent and amiable in their own nature*; and not on account of any conceived relation they bear to ourselves, or to our own interest.

I do not suppose, however, that all relation to our own interest is wholly excluded from any influence in our gracious affections. Self-interest certainly has a consequential influence in those affections which are spiritual and holy, as I shall endeavor to show.

It was before observed, that the affection of love is the fountain of all the other affections; and that Christian love in particular is the foundation of all gracious affections. Now the divine excellency and glory of God, of the word of God, of the works of God, &c. constitute the primary reason why a true saint loves these things, and not any supposed interest that he has in them, or any benefit that he hopes to receive from them, or any such relation to his interest, that self-love can properly be said to be the real foundation of them.

Some persons say that all love arises from self-love, and that it is impossible, in the nature of things, that any man should love God, or any other being, except as that affection springs from self-love. But this opinion arises, I suppose, from want of consideration. It is argued, that "Whoever loves God, and in consequence desires his glory, or the enjoyment of him, desires these things in order to his own happiness." But

how come these things to be so agreeable to us, that we esteem it our highest happiness to glorify God, and enjoy him? Is not this the *fruit* of love? A man must first love God, or have his heart united to him, before he will esteem the cause of God as his own, and before he will desire to glorify and enjoy God, as his happiness.

That kind of affection to God, or to the Redeemer, which properly arises from self-love, cannot be a truly gracious and spiritual affection. This appears from what has been said already; for self-love is a principle entirely natural, and as much in the hearts of devils as in those of angels; and therefore nothing that is the mere result of it, can be supernatural and divine. Jesus Christ very evidently speaks of this kind of love, as what is not at all superior to the love of wicked men: "If ye love them" that "love you, what thank have you? for sinners also love those that love them." Luke, 6: 32. The devil himself knew, that that mercenary kind of respect to God which arises from benefits received, or expected, is worthless in his sight: "Doth Job," says he, "fear God for naught? Hast thou not made an hedge about him and about his house?" &c. Job, 1: 9, 10. Nor would God have allowed the objection to be good; in case the accusation had been well founded, by permitting that the matter should be tried, and that Job should be so dealt with that it might appear ultimately whether his respect to God was mercenary or not.

It is reasonable to suppose that the real foundation of love to God, is that on account of which he is lovely, or worthy to be loved. The nature of God is infinitely excellent: it is infinite beauty and glory. But how can a man truly love God without loving him

for that excellency which is the foundation of all that is in any respect good or desirable in him? Those whose affections to God are founded on mercenary principles reverse the order of things; they regard God only for the stream of divine goodness where it reaches their own interests, and have no respect to that infinite excellency of his nature which is the fountain of all loveliness, and so the foundation of all gracious affection.

Self-love may be the foundation of great affection toward God, without our perceiving any thing of the beauty and glory of the divine nature. Gratitude is one of the natural affections of the soul of man, as well as anger; and there is a gratitude which arises from self-love very much in the same way that anger does. Anger is an affection excited against something which crosses self-love: gratitude is an affection excited by something which gratifies self-love. There may be gratitude without real love, as there may be anger without real hatred. Parents may be angry with their children, and at the same time have a strong habitual love to them. Those wicked men to whom Jesus Christ alludes in the sixth chapter of Luke were possessed of the principle of gratitude: "Sinners also love those that love them." He declares the same even concerning the publicans, who were some of the most carnal and profligate of men. Matt. 5 : 46. This is a principle which even the brutes exercise: a dog will love his master who is kind to him. We see, in numberless instances, that mere natural principles are sufficient to excite gratitude in men for favors received, and sometimes toward those against whom, at the same time, they possess an habitual enmity. Saul was several times greatly affected with gratitude to-

ward David for sparing his life, and yet he remained an habitual enemy to him. And as men, from the mere principles of nature, may be thus affected toward men, so may they toward God. Nebuchadnezzar was greatly affected by the goodness of God in restoring him to his reason and his kingdom, though it is probable he was never divinely enlightened. As gratitude is a natural principle, ingratitude is so much the more vile and heinous, because it shows a dreadful prevalence of wickedness, overpowering the better principles of human nature. It is mentioned as proving the extreme wickedness of some of the heathen, that they were without natural affection. Rom. 1 : 31. But that ingratitude, or the want of natural affection, shows a high degree of depravity, does not prove that all gratitude and natural affection possess the nature of true virtue, or saving grace.

(1.) Self-love, through the exercise of a merely *natural gratitude*, may, in different ways, be the foundation of a kind of love to God. A certain description of love may arise from a false notion of God, which represents him as though he were only goodness and mercy, or as though the exercises of his goodness were necessary, and not free and sovereign.

(2.) Self-love may be the foundation of an affection in men toward God through *insensibility of their state*, and from their not knowing how dreadfully they have provoked him to anger. Having no sense of the heinousness of sin, and of its direct opposition to the holy nature of God, they form an idea of such a god as suits them, and feel a sort of love to him, when they are far from loving the true God. Our affections may be drawn toward God through self-love, by some remarkable benefit received from him. This was the case

with Nebuchadnezzar, and the children of Israel at the Red Sea.

(3.) Very high affections toward God often arise in some persons from a *persuasion of his love to them*. After great distress, through the fear of hell, they suddenly obtain a notion, from some impression on their imaginations, that God loves them, and has forgiven their sins, and made them his children. This is the first thing that causes their affections to flow toward God; and from this cause many of the attributes of God may appear lovely to them. But God is amiable in their view, only as they suppose he has forgiven them—only as they imagine he loves them above most persons in the world, and has engaged to exercise his infinite wisdom and power in exalting them, and in doing for them just what they would have him to do. When they have fully adopted this persuasion, it is easy for them to acknowledge God as being amiable and glorious, and to admire and extol him. It is easy for them to acknowledge Christ as an amiable person, when they are firmly persuaded that he loves them far beyond most of their neighbors; that he loved them from eternity, that he died for them, and that they shall reign with him in everlasting glory. When this is the case with carnal men, their very depravity will make him seem lovely: pride itself will prejudice them in favor of what *they* call Christ. It is natural for proud, selfish man to call that lovely which greatly contributes to his interest and gratifies his pride.

And as these persons begin, so they proceed. Their affections are raised from time to time; but they are primarily founded upon self-love, and a presumed interest in the favor of God. Many professors have a false notion of communion with God, as though it was

carried on by sudden impulses and impressions. Such impulses they interpret as manifestations of the great love of God to them, and as proofs of their distinguished eminence above others of mankind; and thus their false affections are often renewed. Whereas the exercises of holy love arise in a different way. We do not first know that God loves us, and then perceive that he is lovely; but we first perceive that he is lovely—our hearts are first captivated by this view, and hence arise the exercises of our love. Self-love has to do with these affections by way of inference only. False affections begin with self. In the true saint, the excellency of God is the foundation of all the affections which follow. On the contrary, the hypocrite places himself as the foundation. Even his acknowledgments of the glory of God depend on his regard to his own interest.

Self-love may not only influence men, so as to cause them to be affected by the kindness of God to themselves individually; but also to themselves as parts of the community. Self-love is sufficient to produce in us a concern for the interest of the nation to which we belong. The same natural principle may extend even to mankind in general. We may be affected by the blessings which mankind have received beyond the fallen angels. From this principle we may be much affected by the wonderful love of God to mankind in giving his Son to die for sinners, the amazing love of Christ in suffering so much, and the infinite glory which awaits a countless multitude, of which we regard ourselves as forming a part.

But these things do by no means imply that all gratitude to God is a merely natural principle, and that there is no such thing as spiritual gratitude. They

imply no more, than that there is a gratitude which is merely natural; and that when persons love God only, or in the first place, for benefits received, their affection is merely the exercise of such a gratitude. There is undoubtedly a holy gratitude, differing greatly from all that natural men can possibly experience. It differs in the following respects :

Evangelical gratitude, or thankfulness to God for his kindness to us, arises first of all from love to God for what he is in himself; whereas natural gratitude has no such foundation. Gracious affection to God for mercies received, always arises from a stock of love already in the heart, and which has been derived from a view of the divine excellency. The saint having seen the glory of God, and his heart being captivated in consequence, he is easily affected by every kindness received. A man who has no love to another, may yet be moved to gratitude by some extraordinary kindness, as in the case of Saul toward David; but this is not like the gratitude which we experience toward an intimate friend for whom we had previously entertained a very high esteem. Self-love is not, indeed, excluded from gracious gratitude: the saints love God for his kindness to them: "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications." Psalm 116 : 1. But something else is included, and is in fact the foundation of these affections.

In gracious gratitude we are affected by the goodness and grace of God, not only as our own interest is concerned, but as they form a part of the beauty and glory of the divine nature. The wonderful and unparalleled grace of God, which is manifested in the work of redemption, and shines forth in the face of Jesus Christ, is infinitely glorious in itself, and appears so

even to the angels: it is indeed a great part of the moral beauty and perfection of the nature of God. The grace of God would be glorious, whether it were exercised toward *us* or not; and the saint who is impressed with holy gratitude views it in this light, and admires it on this account; though his interest in the unmerited kindness of God serves the more to engage his mind, to fix his attention, and to elevate his affections. Self-love acts as an handmaid, being subservient to higher principles.

Some persons may perhaps be disposed to produce the following passage, as opposing what has been said above: "We love him because he first loved us." I John, 4 : 19. In answer to this I would observe, that the apostle's design in these words is to magnify the love of God to us from this circumstance, that he loved us while we had no love to him; as will be manifest to any one who compares this verse and the two following with the 9th, 10th, and 11th verses.

(1.) The love of the saints to God, is the fruit of the love of God to them, as it is the gift of that love: God gave to them a spirit of love to him, because he loved them from eternity. And in this respect the love of God to his elect is the foundation of their love to him, as it is the foundation of their regeneration, and the whole of their salvation.

(2.) The discoveries which God has made of his wonderful love to men, by Jesus Christ, in the exercise of that love and the work of redemption, are the chief manifestations which God has made of his moral perfections, and therefore are a principal ground of our love to him.

(3.) The love of God to any particular person, manifested in the work of conversion, is a striking exhi-

bition of the moral perfections and glory of God, and a proper occasion of exciting the love and holy gratitude of that individual. That the saints, according to this explanation, love God because he first loved them, fully answers the design of the apostle's argument in the passage quoted above; so that no inference can be drawn from hence against a spiritual and gracious love arising in the first place from a view of the excellency of divine things, and not from any conceived relation they bear to our own interest.

And as it is with the love of the saints, so it is with their joy and spiritual delight; those affections are not founded on any considerations of interest in divine things. They primarily consist in the delight which our minds derive from the contemplation of the divine and holy beauty which these things possess in themselves. This is indeed the main difference between the joy of the hypocrite and the joy of the true saint. The former rejoices in himself; self is the foundation of his joy. The latter rejoices in God. The hypocrite is pleased and delighted, in the first place, with his own privileges, and the happiness to which he supposes he has attained, or shall attain. The saints are pleased and delighted, in the first place, with the amiable and glorious nature of the things of God. This is the spring of all their delights, and the source of all their pleasures. This delightful view of the glorious nature of divine things, is the foundation of all the joy they experience afterward.

The real saint delights in Christ on account of his peculiar excellency. The way of salvation through him, is to the Christian a delightful way, because of its admirable manifestation of the divine perfections. The holy doctrines of the Gospel, by which God is exalted,

and man abased, holiness promoted and honored, and sin discouraged and disgraced, are glorious doctrines in his view, prior to any conception of his personal interest in them. The saints rejoice in their interest in Christ; but this is not the first spring of their joy. They first rejoice in God on account of his peculiar excellencies, and then they rejoice in him on account of what he is to them. They are in the first place filled with love and admiration, from a view of the excellencies of Christ, of his grace, and the way of salvation; and then they rejoice that this Savior, with all the blessings of salvation, is theirs. That which is the saint's superstructure, is the hypocrite's foundation. When hypocrites hear the wonderful things of the Gospel described, in a lively and eloquent manner, they attend with a great deal of pleasure and joy; but if their joy is examined, it will prove to have no other foundation than this—they regard these things as theirs. They delight to hear of the distinguishing love of Christ; for pride and self-love induce them to affect distinction. No wonder, if in this confidence of the goodness of their state, they feel easy, and are pleased with this doctrine in the highest degree. Their joy is really a joy in themselves, and not in God.

The joy of hypocrites is a selfish joy, and hence it is, that in their rejoicing they are accustomed to keep their eye upon themselves. Having received what they call spiritual discoveries, and possessing what they denominate experience, their minds are thereby fully occupied; so that they are principally elevated, not by the contemplation of the glory of God, or the excellencies of Christ, but by their own feelings or experience. They are ready to exclaim, What admirable experience is this! What a glorious discovery is this!

And so they put their experience in the place of Christ, and instead of feasting their souls with what is without them, the refreshing blessings of the Gospel, their eyes are turned from these things, or at least they view them only with a kind of inferior interest. They derive more comfort from their discoveries, than from Christ discovered.

The affections of hypocrites are very often maintained in the same way. They are first much affected by some impression or impulse on their imaginations, which they take to be an immediate suggestion, or testimony from God, with respect to his love to them, and their distinguished privileges: regarding this as a great discovery, they are powerfully worked upon, and hence arise high affections. And when their passions are thus influenced, they feel a persuasion that God is greatly pleased with their affections; and this affects them more, so that they are affected by their affections. And thus their affections are raised higher and higher, until they are filled with self-conceit, and a kind of fierce zeal.

As are the thoughts of those persons, such also is their conversation; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. As they keep their attention fixed upon their experience and attainments, so they talk much about themselves. The true saint, under the influence of great spiritual affections, is ready, from the fulness of his heart, to speak much of God, his glorious perfections and works; of the amiableness of Christ, and the inestimable blessings of the Gospel; but hypocrites, under the influence of *their* high affections, talk more of the discovery than of what they discover; they are fluent in talking about the wonderful discoveries with which they are favored, are confident

of their interest in the love of God, and of their spiritual and everlasting safety.

A real saint, enjoying evangelical discoveries of the glory of God, is too much engaged with what he views *without* himself, to stay at that time to view himself, or his attainments. It would be a serious loss to him to take his eye from the ravishing object of his contemplation, in order to survey his own experience; he cannot spend his time in thinking about the high attainments he has made, or what a pleasing story he will have to tell others. Nor does his pleasure at that time arise chiefly from the consideration of the safety of his state, or any thing else he has in view respecting his own qualifications or circumstances; but from the divine beauty of that object which so powerfully engages his attention.

As the love and joy of hypocrites arise from self-love, so do their other affections: their sorrow for sin, their humiliations and submission, their religious desires and zeal. It is easy for nature, corrupt as it is, under the notion of our being amongst the highest favorites of heaven, to love an imaginary god, who is suited to our depraved dispositions; to submit to him, and to be zealous for his honor. The high affections of many professors are wholly built on the supposition of their being eminent saints. If the elevated opinion which they entertain of themselves was removed—if they saw but a little of the sinfulness and wileness of their hearts, their high affections would soon be destroyed. But as for truly gracious affections, they are founded upon a clear view of the perfections of God; and therefore a discovery of ourselves—of our own deformity, and the meanness of our experience—will not destroy, but rather purify and heighten them.

III. Truly gracious affections are founded on a love of divine things, for their *moral beauty* or *holiness*.

It may be observed, that the word *moral* is not to be understood here according to the common acceptation of the term, referring merely to an outward conformity to the moral law, and especially to the duties of the second table, or to those apparent virtues which proceed wholly from natural principles. The moral excellency of an intelligent being is seated in the heart or will: it is holiness of disposition. He whose will is truly right, is morally good or excellent. The holiness of God is the same as the moral excellency of the divine nature, comprehending all his moral perfections. Holiness in man is but the image of God.

From hence it may be easily understood what I mean when I say that a love to divine things, for their *moral* excellency, is the spring of all holy affections. It has been already shown, under the former head, that divine things are the object of all holy affections, on account of their transcendant excellency. I now proceed further, and say, that *that kind* of excellency of divine things which is the spring of all holy affections, is their *MORAL excellency*, or their *HOLINESS*. Holy persons, in the exercise of holy affections, love divine things primarily for their holiness. They love God, in the first place, on account of his holiness, or moral perfections. Not that the saints, in the exercise of gracious affections, love God *only* on account of his holiness: all his attributes are amiable and glorious in their view. His holiness, however, is the prin-

principal and leading object of their regard. Here it is that true love to God begins. This is the most essential and distinguishing circumstance belonging to a holy affection for God. Love to him on account of his moral perfections, necessarily produces delight in *all* his attributes. His moral perfections cannot exist without his natural perfections; for infinite holiness supposes infinite wisdom, and every attribute of God implies the existence of all the rest.

Moral excellency or holiness constitutes the real loveliness of all intelligent beings. Herein consists the loveliness of the angels, without which, with all their natural perfections, they would have no more loveliness than devils. Natural qualifications are either valuable or otherwise, according as they are, or are not joined with moral excellencies. Without holiness, power and knowledge do not render any being more lovely, but rather more hateful; though they render him more lovely when joined with holiness. Thus the elect angels are the more glorious for their power and knowledge, because these natural perfections are sanctified by moral qualities and dispositions. The holiness of an intelligent creature is the glory of all his natural perfections. Holiness is in a peculiar manner the glory of the divine nature. This sheds a loveliness on all his other attributes. It is the glory of the wisdom of God, that it is a holy wisdom opposed to a wicked subtlety, or crafty deceit.

Hence it is that a view of the loveliness of God must begin here. No other attribute is truly lovely without this, and where this exists every other attribute cannot but be lovely; and therefore it is impossible that other attributes should appear lovely until this is seen; nor can any perfection of the divine nature be loved with

true affection until this is loved. If the real loveliness of the divine perfections arises from the loveliness of the divine holiness, then real love to the other perfections of God must arise from love to his holiness. Those who do not perceive the glory of this attribute, cannot perceive the glory of his mercy and grace; though they may be affected by them, and love them, as they have respect to their own interest; for these attributes are no part of the excellency of the divine nature, any further than as they stand connected with his holiness, or as they form a part of his moral perfections.

As the loveliness of the divine nature primarily consists in the holiness of that nature, so does the beauty of all divine things consist in their holiness. The saints are lovely, because they *are* saints, or holy ones. The moral image of God in them constitutes their beauty and holiness. The Christian religion is excellent, because, above all other religions, it is a holy religion. The word of God is excellent, because it is a holy word. "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether; more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb." Psalm 19 : 9, 10. The Lord Jesus is infinitely amiable—the chief among ten thousands, and altogether lovely; because he is the Holy One of God. Acts, 3 : 14. All the gracious beauties of his human nature—his meekness—his patience—his love to God and to man—his condescension to the mean and vile—his compassion to the miserable, are included in his holiness. And the glory of his divine nature, of which the loveliness of his human nature is the image and reflection, also primarily consists in his holiness. The Gospel is glorious, because

it is a holy Gospel, and a bright emanation of the holy attributes of God. The doctrines of the Gospel are glorious, because they are holy doctrines, or doctrines according to godliness. The way of salvation is glorious, because it is a holy way. Heaven is glorious, because it is the Holy City, the Holy Jerusalem. Rev. 21 : 2, 10. It is therefore primarily on account of this kind of excellency that the saints love all these things.

In considering the first distinguishing characteristic of gracious affections, I observed that there is communicated to those who are regenerated, a new spiritual taste, different in the whole of its nature from any former sensation of the mind; and that something is perceived in spiritual and divine things by a real saint, in the exercise of this new taste, as entirely different from any thing that is perceived in them by natural men, as the taste of honey is different from the idea of it obtained through the medium of sight or feeling. Now, the beauty of holiness is that, in spiritual and divine things, which is perceived by this spiritual sense. The Scriptures often represent the beauty of holiness as the chief object of a gracious taste: "I have meat to eat," said Jesus Christ, "that ye know not of—my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." John, 4 : 32, 34. I know of no part of the Holy Scriptures in which the nature and evidence of true godliness are delineated with so much clearness as in the 119th Psalm. The Psalmist declares his design at the commencement of the psalm, and keeps that design in view all along to the end. The law of God, that grand expression of the holiness of the divine nature, is every where represented as the food and entertainment—the great object of the love and rejoicing of the gracious soul.

A holy love has a holy object. The holiness of love is the love of that which is holy on account of its holiness; so that the holiness of the object is the quality on which it fixes and terminates. A holy nature *must* love that in divine things chiefly which is most agreeable to itself; and that in divine things, which above all others is agreeable to a holy nature, is holiness.

Again; a holy nature undoubtedly loves holy things on account of that for which sinful nature hates them; and that for which sinful nature hates them is their holiness. It is for this that the carnal mind is enmity against God, against the law of God, and against the people of God. Now it is accurate arguing to argue from opposites, that is, from opposite causes to opposite effects; from opposite natures to opposite tendencies. Holiness is directly opposite to wickedness, and therefore, as it is the nature of wickedness to hate and oppose holiness, so it must be the nature of holiness to love and delight in holiness.

In heaven, where its true tendency is best ascertained, the holiness of divine things is what principally attracts the holy nature of the saints and angels. This is the divine beauty which chiefly engages the attention, admiration, and the praises of the Seraphim: "And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory." Isaiah, 6 : 3. "They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." Rev. 4 : 8. The glorified saints are engaged in the same way. "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy." Rev. 15 : 4.

The Scriptures represent the saints on earth as adoring God chiefly on this account. When they praise

God for his power, his holiness also engages their attention: "O sing unto the Lord a new song, for he hath done marvellous things; his right hand and his *holy* arm" have "gotten him the victory." Psalm 98 : 1. When they praise him for his justice and terrible majesty, they likewise have respect to his holiness: "Let them praise thy great and terrible name, for it is HOLY." Psalm 99 : 3. See also verses 5, 9. When they praise God for his mercy and faithfulness, they celebrate his HOLINESS: "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of his HOLINESS." Psalm 97 : 11, 12.

By this circumstance therefore professors may try their affections, particularly their love and joy. Various kinds of creatures manifest the difference of their natures by choosing different things as their chief good, one delighting in what another abhors. Such a difference is there between real saints and unregenerate men. Natural men have no love for the excellency of holy things, at least not on account of their holiness: they have no taste for that kind of good, and may therefore be said not to know it. The saints, by the grace and power of God, have it discovered to them; they have that spiritual perception communicated to them by which they perceive it; and it is this that captivates their hearts and fills them with delight. By this we may examine our love to God. Does it arise from a supreme delight in this kind of beauty without being primarily excited by our imagined interest in spiritual blessings? There are often high affections, with great apparent love and joy, which have nothing of this holy relish belonging to them.

From what has been said it appears, that our having

a clear sense of the natural perfections of God, even if we are greatly affected by them, or having any other view of God than that which arises from a perception of his *moral* perfections, is no certain evidence of grace. In particular we may have a sense of the greatness and majesty of God, for these are only natural perfections, and yet be entirely blind to the beauty of his moral perfections.

It has been shown already, in what was said upon the first distinguishing mark of gracious affections, that that which is spiritual is entirely different in its nature from all that any unregenerate man can possibly experience. But those who are without grace may possess a clear view, and a very affecting sense of the majesty and power of God; for this is what the devils possess, though they have lost the spiritual knowledge of God, consisting in a sense of the excellency of his moral perfections. They are without any sense of that kind of beauty, yet they have a clear knowledge of the natural glory of God. They behold this, are affected by it, and therefore tremble before him. At the day of judgment all intelligent creatures shall behold this glory of God. When Christ shall come in the glory of his Father, and every eye shall see him, he will manifest his infinite majesty to every one in the clearest and most striking manner. Then the wicked shall call to the mountains to fall on them, and hide them from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne. The enemies of God shall behold his glory, and live in a clear and affecting view of it in hell for ever. He hath declared his immutable purpose as to this subject, in so often annexing these words to the threatenings he denounces against the wicked: "And they shall know that I am the Lord." Wicked men

and devils will have a deep sense of every thing that belongs to the glory of God, except the beauty of his moral perfections. They will have a deep sense of every thing belonging to his moral perfections except their beauty and amiableness. They will know and acknowledge that he is perfectly just and righteous; that he is of purer eyes than to behold moral evil with approbation, and that he cannot look upon iniquity but with the greatest abhorrence. Nebuchadnezzar had a very affecting view of the infinite greatness and majesty of God; of his supreme and absolute dominion; of his mighty and irresistible power; and was convinced that he, and all the inhabitants of the earth, were as nothing before him. He had likewise a clear conviction of the justice of God, and a most affecting view of his great goodness. Daniel, 4 : 1, 2, 3, 34, 35, 37. And the sense that Darius had of the perfections of God seems to have been similar to his. Daniel, 6 : 25, &c. But the saints and angels behold the glory of God, as that glory results from his holiness; and it is this sight only that will humble the hearts of men, draw them to God, and effectually change them. A sight of the majesty and greatness of God may overpower the mind; but if the moral beauty of God is hid, the enmity of the heart will remain in its full strength; no love will be enkindled, the WILL will remain inclined to evil; whereas the first glimpse of the moral and spiritual glory of God shining into the heart will produce holiness of disposition, as it were with omnipotent power and absolute certainty

IV. In the production of gracious affections our minds are so *enlightened* that we obtain *proper and spiritual views* of divine things.

Holy affections are not heat without light, but invariably arise from some information conveyed to the understanding. The child of God is graciously affected, because he sees and understands something more of divine things than he did before: something more of God—of Christ—and of the glorious things exhibited in the Gospel: “Every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God.” 1 John, 4 : 7. “I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment.” Phil. 1 : 9. “They have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.” Rom. 10 : 2. “Put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge.” Col. 3 : 10. “It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and learned of the Father, cometh unto me.” John, 6 : 45. Knowledge, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, softens the heart, elevates the affections, and so opens the way into the kingdom of heaven.

There are seeming religious affections which do not arise from light in the understanding; and these affections, let them be ever so strong, are not spiritual. Such is the nature of man that he cannot be affected but by something of which he conceives an idea. But in many persons those conceptions by which they are affected have nothing in them of the nature of knowledge or information. For instance, when a person is affected by a lively idea suddenly excited in his mind, of a very

beautiful countenance, a vivid light, or some other extraordinary appearance, there is something conceived by the mind, but there is nothing of the nature of instruction. Persons do not become wiser by such conceptions, or know more about God, or a Mediator between God and man, or the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, or any thing contained in the doctrines of the Gospel.

Truly spiritual and gracious affections arise from the understanding being enlightened as to what is taught respecting God and Jesus Christ; so that we clearly discover the glorious nature of God, and obtain new views of Christ in his fullness and divine excellencies. Those things which relate to the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, are presented to our minds with a new aspect, in consequence of which we now understand those holy and divine doctrines which before were foolishness to us. Such light communicated to the understanding is entirely different from lively conceptions of shapes and colors, of brightness and glory, or of voices and sounds. If all gracious affections arise from light in the understanding, those which are produced by mere impressions on the imagination are not gracious. Hence it also appears, that affections arising from texts of Scripture impressed on the mind are delusive, when no information is communicated by them to the understanding, and when the manner of their coming to the mind, rather than any thing taught by them, is the ground of those affections. When Christ makes his word the means of gracious affections, it is by opening the Scriptures to our understandings. "Did not our hearts burn within us," exclaimed the disciples, "while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the

Scriptures?" Luke, 24 : 32. It appears also that religious affections which are occasioned by a text of Scripture coming to our minds, must be delusive when those affections are founded on something supposed to be taught by it, but which in fact is not, nor in any other part of Scripture, because such imagined instruction is nothing but a mistake and misapprehension. As, for instance, when persons suppose that they are expressly taught by some passage of Scripture thus coming to their minds, that *they* in particular are beloved of God, or that *their* sins in particular are forgiven, this is a mistake or misapprehension: the Scriptures no where refer directly to the individual persons who are beloved of God, and whose sins are pardoned; they only describe the character which is the object of the divine approbation, and therefore our interest in his favor is not to be ascertained from Scripture in any other way than as we possess such a character. Things are not to be learnt from the Scriptures, but *as* they are taught in the Scriptures.

In these instances, as well as in some others which might be mentioned, ardent affections arise from ignorance, rather than from knowledge. Some persons, when they enjoy freedom in prayer, believe that God is with them, without examining the cause of that freedom; and this persuasion elevates, and consequently increases their affections. There are many other sources from whence this freedom may rise, beside the spiritual presence of God. Some persons are much affected by striking thoughts which come into their minds about Scripture, and which they call the teaching of the Spirit of God. They frequently ascribe the workings of their own minds to the special and immediate influence of the Holy Spirit. There are instances in which

it seems evident that the primary source of affection is some bodily sensation. The animal spirits, probably sometimes by satanic influence, are suddenly and unaccountably put into a very agreeable motion, so that a pleasant sensation is experienced. The mind is exhilarated, and the soul, through the laws of union between it and the body, feels pleasure. Hence from ignorance it is concluded that this proceeds from the Holy Spirit.

And even though our religious affections do arise from some light in the understanding, those affections are not gracious unless the light which is the cause of them is spiritual. Affections may be excited by that knowledge of divine things which is obtained by mere human teaching, and the common improvement of the mental powers. We may be affected by the knowledge of the things of religion as some persons have been by discoveries in mathematics and natural philosophy. Religious affections may be excited by common illuminations of the Spirit of God, as in the case of some persons of whom we read in Scripture, who, it is said, were once enlightened.

The Scriptures teach us nothing more clearly than that there is a spiritual, supernatural knowledge of divine things peculiar to the saints. It is certainly a kind of knowledge, or perception of divine things, of which natural men are destitute, which is spoken of in the following passages: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. 2 : 14. See also to the same purpose, 1 John, 3 : 6; 3 John, 11; John, 6 : 45; 14 : 19; 17 : 3. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the

Father," but "the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Matt. 11 : 27.

From hence we may infer wherein spiritual knowledge consists; for if there is in the saints a kind of perception in its nature quite different from all that natural men can possess; it must, of course, consist in certain ideas, or sensations of mind, different from every thing that natural men experience; and this is the same thing as saying that it consists in the sensations of a new spiritual principle.

The apostle clearly asserts, that the chief thing discovered by spiritual light, and which is therefore the subject of spiritual knowledge, is the glory of divine things: "But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. 4 : 3, 4, 6. "But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord;" 3 : 18. The Scriptures often give us a summary of true religion, as consisting in the love of divine things; and therefore that knowledge which is the foundation of true religion must be the perception of the loveliness of divine things. It is evident that there is nothing belonging to divine things beside their moral excellency, and the properties and qualities resulting from thence, but what natural men and devils can perceive, and will clearly and fully perceive to all eternity.

From what has been said, we necessarily come to this conclusion: that a spiritual understanding consists in a *sense of the heart* of the holiness or moral perfection of divine things, together with all that discernment and knowledge of the things of religion which depends upon and flows from such a sense.

It is not speculation merely, that is concerned in this kind of knowledge; nor can we draw a clear distinction between the two faculties of understanding and will, as acting in this matter. When the mind is sensible of the beauty and amiableness of any object, there is invariably a delight in the idea of that object; and this delight is a sense of the heart, or an impression of which the soul is the subject, as endowed with perception, inclination, and will.

We should distinguish between a mere speculative knowledge and that knowledge in the possession of which the mind not only speculates, but *feels* and *relishes*. That kind of knowledge by which we receive the impression of loveliness or hatefulness, is not exactly the same kind of knowledge as that by which we perceive the nature of a square or a triangle. The one is mere speculative knowledge, the other a knowledge connected with the affections, in which something more than mere intellect is concerned—something that not only beholds, but has *inclination*, and is *pleased* or *displeased*.

The apostle evidently makes a distinction between merely speculative, and spiritual knowledge in religion. The former is called "the form of knowledge." Rom. 2: 20. The latter is often represented under the idea of relishing or tasting: "Now thanks be unto God," who "always causeth us to triumph in Christ Jesus, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge in every

place." 2 Cor. 2 : 14. "As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be" that "ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." 1 Peter, 2 : 2, 3.

Spiritual knowledge primarily consists in this sense or taste of the moral beauty of divine things; so that no knowledge can be called spiritual any further than as it arises from this source, and partakes of it. But, in the second place, it includes all that discernment or knowledge of the things of religion which flows from such a sense.

When the beauty and loveliness of divine things are manifested to the soul, a new world is presented to its view. The glory of all the perfections of God, and of every thing belonging to the divine Being, is exhibited. Through this perception of the moral beauty of divine things, the sufficiency of Christ as a Mediator is discovered; for it is only by discerning the beauty of the moral perfections of Christ, that we perceive the sufficiency of his atonement as a Mediator.

It is by this means that we obtain a clear view of the fitness of the way of salvation to deliver us from sin and hell, and to bring us to a state of everlasting happiness in a way perfectly agreeing with the moral perfections of God. It is thus that we discover the excellency of the word of God. Take away all the moral beauty of the Scriptures, and the Bible is left a dead letter. By viewing the moral beauty of divine things we perceive the true foundation of our obligations, the amiableness of religious duties, and the worthiness of God to be submitted to, esteemed, honored and served according to his requirements. By this also is perceived the evil of sin; for he who has a clear perception of the beauty of holiness, must ne-

cessarily perceive the hatefulness of sin. By this we likewise form an idea of the glory of heaven, consisting in the happiness that arises from perfect holiness. He who perceives the beauty of holiness, or real moral good, perceives the most important object in the world; for unless this is perceived, nothing is perceived worth our attention. Unless this is understood, nothing is understood that is worth the exercise of our understandings. This is the beauty of the Godhead. He in effect knows nothing who knows not this. Well, therefore, may the Scriptures represent those who are destitute of that spiritual perception, by which the beauty of holiness is perceived, as totally blind: and well may regeneration, in which this divine perception is communicated to the soul by its Creator, be represented as opening the eyes of the blind. For if what has been said is considered, it will be manifest, that when a person has this perception and knowledge given him, he will view nothing as he did before; though before he knew all things after the flesh, yet henceforth he will know them so no more; he is become a new creature, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new. 2 Cor. 5 : 16, 17.

And besides what has already been mentioned, all true experimental knowledge of religion arises from this perception of spiritual beauty. He who perceives not the beauty of holiness, is destitute of all holy comfort and delight—all the consoling influences of the Spirit of God.

Hence it is evident that implanting this spiritual and holy perception produces a great change; and were it not for the very imperfect degree in which this perception is in general communicated at first, the change would be much greater, and more remarkable than if

a man, born blind, should all at once, and in the clear light of the sun, have the sense of seeing imparted unto him.

This is that knowledge of divine things from whence all truly gracious affections proceed; and by which, therefore, all religious affections are to be tried. Those affections which arise wholly from any other knowledge, or result from any other perception, or state of mind, are delusive.

From what has been said, the difference between that light which is sometimes possessed by natural men, and that saving instruction which is communicated to the saints, may be easily ascertained. The latter consists in beholding the *moral excellency*, and *holy beauty* of divine things: the former in that knowledge of them which may be obtained by the ordinary exercise of our faculties. In those convictions of conscience, of which natural men are often the subjects, the Spirit of God communicates no knowledge of the moral beauty of divine things; but only assists the mind to a clearer view of the guilt of sin, and its certain connection with the evil of suffering; and to a clearer view of the natural perfections of God, consisting not so much in his holy and glorious beauty, as in his awful and terrible greatness. A clear sight of this will fully awaken the conscience of wicked men at the day of judgment, without any spiritual light. It is a less degree of this, which, without spiritual light, awakens the consciences of natural men now. In those common illuminations, the mind is only assisted to a clearer perception of the natural good existing in divine things. Thus the minds of unregenerate men are sometimes elevated by considering the happiness and glory of heaven. There are many things revealed in the Gospel

respecting God and the way of salvation which suit the principle of self-love. For instance, in the goodness of God, and in the wonderful love of Christ to sinners, there is a natural good, which all men love as they love themselves, as well as a spiritual and holy beauty, which is perceived only by the regenerate. There are many things belonging to the word of God, as delivered to us in the Gospel, which may induce natural men to receive it with joy. All the hatred of unregenerate men to sin, is as much from a principle of nature as their hatred to a serpent or a tiger; and all their love of Christian virtue, is from no higher a principle than that which renders silver and gold amiable in the estimation of an avaricious merchant.

From what has been said of the nature of spiritual knowledge, it appears, that it does not consist in any new doctrinal views, or in having suggested to the mind any new proposition not before read or heard of; for it is evident that such suggestions are entirely different from giving to the mind a new taste or relish. It is also evident, that spiritual knowledge does not consist in any new doctrinal explanation of any part of the Scriptures; for still, this is but doctrinal knowledge, or the knowledge of propositions. The doctrinal explanation of any part of Scripture is only giving us to understand what are the propositions contained or taught in that part of Scripture.

Hence it appears likewise, that a spiritual knowledge of Scripture does not consist in understanding the mystical meaning of its parables, types and allegories; for this is only doctrinal knowledge. It is possible that a person may know how to interpret all the types, parables and allegories in the Bible, and not have one beam of spiritual light in his mind, being destitute of

that perception of the holy beauty of divine things which has been spoken of. It is clear from what the apostle says, that we may understand all such mysteries, and have no saving grace: "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." 1 Cor. 13 : 2. Those persons, therefore, are much mistaken, who are exalted with an opinion of their spiritual attainments, merely from notions which come into their minds respecting the mystical meaning of certain passages of Scripture, as though this was a spiritual knowledge of those passages, immediately given them by the Spirit of God.

To understand the Scriptures spiritually, is to understand them properly, and not to attach to them a new meaning. When the mind is spiritually enlightened, so as properly to understand the Scriptures, it is enabled to see that in them which before was not seen, merely in consequence of mental blindness. Now if it is merely in consequence of mental blindness that we do not perceive the true meaning of Scripture, it is evident that our being enlightened does not give a new meaning to that Scripture. It is no blindness not to see a meaning which does not exist. "Open thou mine eyes," says the Psalmist, "that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." Psalm 119 : 18. The reason why the wondrous things of the word of God are not beheld by us, is, that our eyes are not opened. Now this would not be the case, if the true meaning of Scripture was not the same, whether we perceive it or not; or if a new meaning was added by the manner in which particular passages are suggested to the mind. Attaching a new meaning to Scripture, is the same thing as making new Scriptures: it is properly adding

to the word, and this is threatened with a most awful curse. To understand the Scriptures spiritually, is to have the mind enlightened to behold the spiritual excellency of the glorious things contained in them, and which were always contained in them—it is to behold the amiable manifestations of the divine perfections, the excellency and sufficiency of Christ, the suitability of the way of salvation, the spiritual glory of the precepts and promises of the Bible, &c.

The leadings of the Holy Spirit consist in two things—in giving us instruction as to our duty, and in disposing us to comply with that instruction. But so far as the gracious leadings of the Spirit of God relate merely to instruction, they consist in giving a spiritual and discriminating taste as to real moral beauty. I have already shown the nature of spiritual knowledge. When an amiable and holy action is suggested to the mind of a gracious person, that person, if in the lively exercise of his spiritual taste, at once perceives a beauty in that action, and his conduct is influenced accordingly. On the contrary, if an unworthy, unholy action is suggested, he perceives nothing but deformity, and is immediately displeased with it. This holy taste leads him justly to estimate what, in a moral view, is truly lovely, as naturally as a healthy appetite suggests the idea of its proper food. Thus a regenerate person is led by the Spirit, as he is directed by his holy taste or disposition; whereby, in the lively exercise of grace, he easily distinguishes good from evil; and in most cases, knows at once what is a suitable behavior toward God and toward man. He needs no particular deduction to influence his conduct, nor any other argument than what the beauty which is perceived, and the goodness which is tasted, suggest. Jesus Christ

blames the Pharisees because they did not, even of their own selves, without miracles, judge what was right. The Apostle Paul evidently has respect to this way of judging of spiritual beauty, when he says, "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Rom. 12 : 2.

A holy disposition and spiritual taste, when grace is strong and lively, will enable a person to determine what actions are right and becoming in a Christian, not only more speedily, but far more correctly, than the greatest abilities without them. The tendency of a stone, let fall from a height, shows the way to the centre of the earth more accurately, and in far less time, than the ablest mathematician could demonstrate it in any other way. So likewise will a spirit of love to God, and a heavenly disposition, guide us in our behavior.

It is an exceedingly difficult thing for a wicked man to demean himself like a real Christian. "When he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth him, and he saith to every one that he is a fool." Eccl. 10 : 3. "The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright, but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness." Prov. 15 : 2.

The saints in thus judging of actions by a spiritual taste, have not always a particular reference to the express rules of the word of God, though their taste itself is in general subject to those rules. A spiritual taste very much assists the mind in its reasonings on the word of God, as it removes prejudice; and through the harmony subsisting between the disposition of a real Christian, and the doctrines and precepts of the sacred writings, its meaning, in general, is easily ascertained.

This disposition naturally tends to bring texts of Scripture to our minds, just as a particular state of appetite frequently brings particular kinds of meat and drink to mind, such as are agreeable to that state.

What has been said of the nature of spiritual knowledge, as consisting chiefly and most essentially in a divine supernatural principle, or holy disposition, not only shows that there is no such knowledge in this supposed leading of the Spirit; but also exhibits the difference between spiritual knowledge and all kinds of enthusiasm, all imaginary sights of God, and Christ, and heaven; all supposed testimonies of the love of God by immediate, inward suggestion; and all applications of the words of Scripture, as though they were *now* spoken immediately by God to particular persons.

In general, false experience raises the affections to a great height. A chief part of the false religion which has appeared in the world, in different ages, has consisted in such discoveries as these, and in the affections which have arisen from them. It was so with the Pythagoreans, and many other ancient heathens, who had strange raptures, and pretended to immediate revelations from heaven; with the Essenes, an ancient sect among the Jews; and with many of the Gnostics, the Montanists, and other sects of heretics, in the primitive ages of the Christian church. The Monks, Anchorites, and Recluses, who formerly abounded in the church of Rome, pretended to immediate converse with God, and Christ, and angels. Various sects of enthusiasts, who swarmed in the world immediately after the reformation, pretended to high experiences and great spirituality. So also did those in England in the days of Oliver Cromwell, the adherents of Mrs. Hutchinson in New-England, and the late

French prophets and their followers. And in these things also, the religion of the various kinds of enthusiasts of the present day seems to consist. It is chiefly by such a religion as this that Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, and that he has produced confusion in many of the happiest revivals of religion since the foundation of the Christian church. When the Spirit of God is poured out in a more abundant manner, the old serpent, as soon as possible, introduces this false religion, and mingles it with the true. The pernicious consequences of this are not easily imagined until we behold its baneful effects and the dreadful desolations produced by it. Ministers should therefore maintain a strict guard against this kind of delusion, especially at a time of great awakening; for many persons, particularly among the common people, are easily seduced by such things as have a show of extraordinary religion.

If persons keep no guard at those avenues by which Satan has access to the soul, he is likely to be a frequent guest; especially if, instead of guarding against him, they expose themselves to his attacks, and invite him by cherishing counterfeit illuminations and graces, inward whispers, immediate suggestions, and other impressions on the imagination. There are many persons who, deluded by such impressions, seek after them, and have a continued succession of them, especially when their pride and vanity have most occasion for them, in order to make a fair appearance amongst professors.

I do not assert, however, that no affections are spiritual which are attended by something imaginary. When our minds are fully occupied, and our thoughts intensely engaged, our imaginations are often stronger,

and our ideas more lively. This is the case especially with some constitutions of body. But there is a great difference between lively imaginations, arising from strong affections, and strong affections arising from lively imaginations. Undoubtedly the former often exist in cases of truly gracious affection. The affections do not arise from the imagination, nor have they any dependence upon it; but, on the contrary, the imagination is only the accidental effect, or consequence of the affection, through the infirmity of human nature. But when the affection arises from the imagination, and is built upon it, instead of being founded upon spiritual illumination, then is the affection, however elevated, of no value.

V. Gracious affections are attended by *a rational and spiritual conviction* respecting the truth and reality of divine things.

This seems to be implied in the text adopted as the foundation of this discourse: "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet BELIEVING, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

Those persons who are truly gracious, have such a conviction as to the truth of the great subjects of the Gospel, that they no longer halt between two opinions; this conviction is effectual, so that the Gospel has the power and influence of reality, and accordingly rules their affections, and governs their conduct, throughout the rest of their lives. With respect to Jesus Christ, as being the Son of God and Savior of the world, they

not only yield their assent to this doctrine, as they do to many subjects of doubtful speculation, but their minds are so enlightened that they are clearly and fully convinced of its truth and importance. And as to what Jesus Christ has revealed of the eternal purpose, and designs of God respecting fallen man, and the glorious things prepared for the saints in another world, they feel the clearest conviction of their truth. Hence those things are of great weight with them, and have a powerful influence upon their minds, and in reference to their practice.

That all true Christians have such a conviction of the truth of what is revealed in the Gospel, is abundantly evident from the Holy Scriptures. I will quote a few passages: "Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe, and are sure that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." John, 6: 68, 69. "I have manifested thy name unto the men" whom "thou gavest me out of the world. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and know surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me." John, 17: 6, 7, 8. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Heb. 11: 1. See the whole of the chapter. "Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit; and we have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us." 1 John, 4: 13-16. "For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world;

and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" 5 : 4, 5. "For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are in the body, we are absent from the Lord; for we walk by faith, not by sight." 2 Cor. 5 : 1, 6, 7.

There are many affections which are not attended by such a conviction of the judgment; and many impressions, called by those who possess them, divine discoveries, which are affecting but not convincing. Though for a time those who experience them appear to be more persuaded of the truth of the things of religion than they formerly were, and though they yield a forward assent, like many of the hearers of Christ, yet they have no thorough and effectual conviction, nor is there any abiding change produced in them. There are many persons who have had their minds exceedingly elevated by certain affections, who think they are converted, but are no more convinced of the truth of the Gospel than they formerly were; or at least there is no remarkable alteration in them: they do not live under the influence and power of a realizing conviction of the infinite importance of divine things; if they did, it would be impossible for them to live as they do. As their affections are not attended by a thorough conviction of the judgment, however elevated, they are not at all to be depended upon; they are like the blaze of tow, the crackling of thorns, or the forward blade on stony ground, which has no root to maintain its life.

But even if our affections do indeed arise from a strong persuasion of the truth of the Christian religion,

they are no better on that account, unless this persuasion is a rational persuasion, or a conviction founded on real evidence, or that which is a proper ground of conviction. We may have a strong persuasion that the Christian religion is true, when this persuasion is built altogether on education or the opinion of others. Mahomedans are strongly persuaded of the truth of their religion, because their fathers, and neighbors, and countrymen believe it. That belief of the Christian religion, which is built upon the same grounds as the Mahomedan's belief of his religion, is the very same kind of belief. And though what is believed is unspeakable better, that does not render the belief itself of a better kind; for though what is believed happens to be true, yet the belief of it is not owing to its truth, but to education, or early imbibed partiality. As the conviction is no better than the Mahomedan's conviction, so the affections which flow from it, are no better than the religious affections of Mahomedans.

But supposing the belief of Christian doctrines, from which these affections arise, is not from education, but from rational conviction, it will not necessarily follow that such affections are gracious; for, in order to this, it is requisite, not only that the faith from which these affections spring should be a rational, but also a spiritual conviction. No person will doubt but that some unregenerate men yield a kind of assent to the truth of the Christian religion from the rational proofs by which that truth is supported. Judas, without doubt, from what he saw and heard, believed Jesus to be the Messiah, but yet he was all along a devil. John, 6 : 70. Simon the sorcerer believed, when he beheld the miracles and the signs which were done; yet he remained in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

Acts, 8 : 13, 23. And if there is such a conviction of the judgment in some natural men, we cannot doubt but that religious affections may arise from that conviction. We read of some who believed for a while, who were greatly affected, and who immediately, and with joy, received the word.

It is evident that there *is a spiritual conviction* of the truth of the Gospel—a belief which is peculiar to those persons who are regenerated, and have the Spirit of God in his holy communications, dwelling in them, as a vital principle. It is also evident, that this conviction not only differs from what natural men experience, in that it is accompanied by good works, but that the belief itself is different: the assent and conviction of the judgment is of a peculiar kind. 'This is clearly proved from Scripture: "According to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness." Titus, 1 : 1. 'The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.'" John, 16 : 27. "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." 1 John, 4 : 15. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." 5 : 1. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." 5 : 10.

What a spiritual conviction is, we may ascertain from what has been said already of spiritual knowledge. Conviction arises from the illumination of the understanding. Our passing a right judgment upon things, depends upon our having a right conception or idea of those things. Hence it follows, that a spiritual conviction of the truth of the Gospel is such a conviction, as arises from a spiritual view or conception of the Gospel. And this also is evident from the Scriptures

which often represent a saving belief of the reality and divinity of the things exhibited in the Gospel, as springing from the enlightening of the mind by the Holy Spirit, so as to give us a right conception of those things: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast HIDDEN these things from the wise and prudent, and hast REVEALED them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father, and he to whom the Son will REVEAL him." Luke, 10 : 21, 22. "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one who SEETH the Son, and BELIEVETH on him," should "have everlasting life." John, 6 : 40. From this passage it is evident that faith arises from a spiritual sight of Christ. See also John, 17 : 6, 7, 8 ; Matt. 16 : 16, 17 ; 1 John, 5 : 10 ; Gal. 1 : 14-16.

If a spiritual conviction of the reality and divinity of what is exhibited in the Gospel arises from a spiritual knowledge of those things, then the mind is spiritually convinced of their truth and divinity, when our conviction arises either immediately, or remotely, from a spiritual sense, or view of their divine excellency and glory. This clearly follows from what has been already said; and upon this point the Scriptures are very express and decisive: "But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that BELIEVE NOT, lest the light of the GLORIOUS GOSPEL of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the LIGHT OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GLORY OF GOD in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. 4 : 3 6. "But we all with open face,

beholding as in a glass the GLORY OF THE LORD, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. 3 : 18. Nothing can be more evident than that a saving belief of the Gospel is here intended—a belief arising from the mind being enlightened to behold the divine glory of those things which it reveals.

This view of the divine glory of those things which are exhibited in the Gospel, has a tendency to convince the mind of their divinity both *directly* and *indirectly*.

(1.) A view of this divine glory convinces the mind of the divinity of those things, as it is in itself a *direct* and *powerful* evidence, especially when the discovery is clear, or when the supernatural taste spoken of above is communicated in a considerable degree.

He who has his judgment thus *directly* convinced of the divinity of the Gospel, by a clear view of its divine glory, has a rational conviction, because the glory of divine things is itself the most direct, and the strongest evidence of their divinity. He who truly perceives the transcendent glory of divine things, is convinced of their divinity, as it were intuitively; he beholds that in them wherein their divinity chiefly consists; for from this glory, which so immensely exceeds all other glory, we mainly deduce our notions of divinity. God is distinguished from all other beings chiefly by his divine glory. Those persons, therefore, who perceive the stamp of this glory upon divine things, behold that in them from whence we chiefly derive our ideas of the divinity of their nature. Thus a person may have a kind of intuitive knowledge of the divinity of what the Gospel exhibits. He does not conclude, however, without any deduction or argument at all, that its doctrines and precepts are from

God, but this conviction is obtained without any long chain of argument; the evidence is direct, the mind ascends to the truth of the Gospel by one step only—its divine glory.

It would be very strange for any professing Christian to deny that there is an excellency in divine things, so transcendent, and so exceedingly different from the glory of every thing else, that if it were seen it would very clearly and at once distinguish them. We cannot reasonably doubt that those things which are divine, which belong to the Supreme Being, are vastly different from all that is human; and that there is a godlike, glorious excellency in them, which so distinguishes them from those things which are of men, that the difference is ineffable, and therefore such as will, if perceived, have a most convincing, satisfying influence upon the human mind as to their divinity. Doubtless there is a glory and excellency in the Divine Being, by which he is infinitely distinguished from all other beings; and it would be very unreasonable to deny that it is possible for God to give manifestations of his distinguishing excellency in those things by which he is pleased to make himself known. There are natural excellencies which very clearly indicate the superiority of their subject or author. How vastly is the conversation of an intelligent man different from that of a little child! and how clearly distinguishable are the works of some men of great genius, as Homer, Cicero, Milton, Locke, Addison, &c. from the works of inferior, though well-informed men! No limits can be set to the different degrees of mental excellence which may be observable in different men; but the appearance of the natural perfections of God, in the manifestations he makes of himself, are undoubtedly

more evident and striking. He who is at all acquainted with the works of man, upon viewing the sun will immediately conclude that it is no human work. It is reasonable to suppose, that when Christ appears at the end of the world in the glory of his Father, it will be with such ineffable appearances of divinity as will leave no doubt upon the minds of the inhabitants of the world, even of the most obstinate infidels, that he is a divine person.

But, above all, the manifestations of the moral and spiritual glory of the Divine Being carry with them their own evidence. Thus the disciples were assured that Jesus was the Son of God, because "they beheld his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." John, 1 : 14. When Christ appeared to his disciples in the glory of his transfiguration, that manifestation was such as perfectly assured them of his divinity. "We were eyewitnesses of his majesty; for he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice—from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount." 2 Peter, 1 : 16—18.

Now this distinguishing glory of the Divine Being has its brightest manifestation in the Gospel, in the doctrines there taught, the duties there enjoined, and the divine counsels there revealed. And if there is such a distinguishing manifestation of divine glory in the Gospel, it is reasonable to suppose that that glory may be perceived. What should prevent this? That some do not perceive it, is no argument that it cannot be perceived. If there is such ineffable, distinguishing excellencies in the Gospel, it is reasonable to suppose

that these excellencies are not to be discerned, but by the special, enlightening influence of the Spirit of God. In order to discern the distinguishing excellencies of the works of authors of great genius, a peculiar taste is required. In the opinion of those who are endowed with a better taste, those things in Milton which to bad judges appear tasteless, are his inimitable excellencies. If there is a book of which God is the author, it is most reasonable to suppose that its distinguishing glories are of such a nature that the depravity of the human heart will prevent the unregenerate from perceiving them.

Many of the most important things revealed in the Bible are hid from the eyes of natural men; the truth of which so immediately depends upon this excellency, or results from it, that as soon as the latter is perceived, the former is cordially believed. As soon as our eyes are opened to behold the holy beauty and glory of divine things, a number of most important doctrines of the Gospel, which appear strange to natural men, are at once perceived to be true. As for instance, the truth of what God declares concerning the exceeding evil of sin, is perceived; for the same light which shows the transcendent beauty of holiness, necessarily shows the exceeding odiousness of sin. A person thus enlightened discovers his own sinfulness; he perceives the dreadful pollution of his heart, and in consequence is convinced of the truth of what the Scriptures declare concerning the corruption of human nature, our absolute need of a Savior, and of the mighty power of God to renew the heart. Upon discovering the beauty of holiness we perceive the glory of those perfections which both reason and Scripture attribute to the Divine Being. Having a clear view of the glorious perfections

of Deity, we are easily convinced of the truth of what the Scriptures declare as to the dreadful punishment annexed to sin, the impossibility of our making any satisfaction to the injured justice of God, and our need of an atonement of infinite value, for the purpose of making that satisfaction. A sense of spiritual beauty enables the mind to perceive the dignity and glory of the person of Christ, the infinite excellency of the offering he made for us, and its sufficiency to atone for our sins, and to recommend us to God. Thus the Spirit of God shows the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, and by that means we discover the admirable wisdom of the contrivance, and the perfect adaptation of the provision of the Gospel to our necessities. What the prophecies of the Old Testament, and the writings of the apostles declare concerning the glory of Messiah's kingdom, is now understood by us. We now also discover the reasons and ground of our duty.

And besides all this, the truth of what the Scriptures say about experimental religion is hereby known; for it is now experienced, and we are convinced that one who knew the heart of man better than we do, was the author of the Scriptures. The discovery of such important and glorious truths necessarily has a powerful influence in convincing the mind of the divinity of the sacred writings.

Unless a man may obtain, in the way already mentioned, a rational and well-founded persuasion of the truth of the Gospel from its internal evidence, it is impossible that those who are illiterate and unacquainted with history, should have any effectual and satisfactory conviction of its truth at all. They may, without this, perceive a great deal of probability as to its truth: it may appear reasonable for them to give much

credit to what learned men tell them; but a conviction so clear and strong as to induce them with cheerfulness to venture their all upon it, no evidence *they* can derive from history will be sufficient to produce. After all that learned men have said upon the subject there will remain innumerable doubts upon their minds. When exercised by some severe trial of their faith they will be ready to say, "How do we know when these histories were composed? Learned men, indeed, tell us, that their truth was sufficiently attested at the time that they were written; but how can we ascertain that circumstance? They tell us there is as much reason to believe what they relate, as to believe any thing related in reference to the same period; but we cannot be certain of that."

The Gospel was not given for learned men only. There are perhaps ninety-nine in a hundred of those for whom the Scriptures were written, who are not capable of any clear conviction of the divine authority of the Scriptures, by such arguments as are generally used by learned men. If those who have been brought up in heathenism must wait, for a clear conviction of the truth of Christianity, until they are acquainted with the histories of politer nations, the evidence of the Gospel to them would be nearly lost, and the propagation of divine truth amongst them infinitely difficult.

It is unreasonable to suppose that God has provided no more than probable evidence of the truth of the Gospel. He has furnished the most abundant and satisfactory proofs. The covenant of grace is ordered in all things and sure; and it is reasonable to conclude that there would be clear evidence that this *is his* covenant; or, which is the same thing, that the Christian religion is true: otherwise, in vain are those assurances

which he has given us of his faithfulness to his covenant, by confirming it with an oath; for the evidence that this *is his* covenant, is the foundation on which all those assurances stand. We may therefore conclude with confidence that God has given some evidence that this covenant *is his*, which does not depend upon mere probability; that there are some grounds of assurance which, if we are not blind to them, tend to produce a firmer persuasion than any arguments from history. It is natural to suppose that God would give the clearest evidence of those things which are of the greatest importance to us, and of the truth of which, if we act rationally, we shall feel the greatest desire to possess the fullest assurance. But it is certain, that, by the greater part of those who live under the Gospel, such an assurance is not to be obtained by arguments derived from ancient history.

And if we come to experience and fact, we shall be induced to conclude, that not one in a hundred of those who have been sincere Christians, were convinced of the truth of the Gospel in this way. If we read the history of the thousands who, at the time of the reformation, were martyrs for Christ, and cheerfully suffered extreme tortures, in confidence of the truth of the Gospel; and if we consider their circumstances and want of advantages, we shall be convinced that few of them obtained their confidence from historic evidence. Many of them were women and children, and the greater part of them illiterate persons; most of them had lived in Popish ignorance, and were but newly brought to the knowledge of the truth. At that time also the arguments for the truth of Christianity from antiquity and history, had been but very imperfectly studied.

The Gospel of the blessed God has its strongest and most appropriate evidence *in itself*. Great use, however, may be made of arguments deduced from history, and certainly they ought not to be neglected; but rather highly valued. They may be serviceable in confirming the faith of the saints, and in removing the unbelief of infidels. It is still true that there is no spiritual and gracious conviction of the judgment but what arises from a view of the beauty and glory of divine things; and that this view has a tendency to convince the mind of the truth of the Gospel both *directly* and *indirectly*. Having already shown how it does this *directly*, I proceed now,

(2.) To observe, how a view of this divine glory convinces the human mind of the truth of Christianity *indirectly*.

The *prejudices* of the human heart against divine things are thereby *removed*. The mind of man is naturally full of enmity against the doctrines of the Gospel, and this produces a powerful disadvantage as to those arguments which prove their truth. But when a person has the transcendent excellency of divine things manifested to him, his enmity is destroyed, his prejudices removed, and his reason sanctified. Hence arises a vast difference as to the force of arguments in convincing the mind. Hence arose the very different success which attended the miracles of Christ in convincing his disciples, from what they had in convincing the Scribes and Pharisees. The minds of his disciples were not more cultivated, but they were sanctified; and those blinding prejudices by which the Scribes and Pharisees were influenced, were removed by the view they had of the excellency of Christ and of his doctrines.

This view of the divine glory not only removes obstructions from our minds, but *positively assists them*. It engages our serious attention to divine things, whereby we obtain a clearer view of them, and are enabled more distinctly to perceive their mutual relations. Our ideas of religious objects, which otherwise are faint and obscure, by this means have a light cast upon them, so that the mind can form a more accurate judgment respecting them; as he who beholds objects when the light of the sun shines upon them, is under greater advantage in discerning their true forms and mutual relations, than he who only sees them by star-light.

What has been said will serve, in some measure, to show the nature of spiritual convictions as they relate to the truth and importance of divine things; and so will enable us to distinguish truly gracious affections from others; for gracious affections are invariably attended by such a conviction of the judgment.

VI. Gracious affections are attended by *evangelical humiliation*.

Humiliation is of two kinds, legal and evangelical. The former may be exercised while we are in a state of nature; the latter is peculiar to the saints, and consists in the sense they have of their own utter insufficiency, despicableness and odiousness, with an answerable frame of heart. In legal humiliation men may be made sensible of their worthlessness and guilt in the sight of God; but they have not a correspondent frame of heart, which leads them to see their own odiousness on account of sin, to abase themselves before God, and to exalt him alone. This frame of mind is given in evangelical

humiliation only, in which the inclination is changed by a discovery of the holy beauty of God. In legal humiliation the conscience is convinced; but the will is not bowed, nor is the inclination altered. In legal humiliation men are brought to despair of helping themselves; in evangelical they are brought voluntarily to deny and renounce themselves: in the former they are subdued and forced to the ground; in the latter they are brought sweetly to yield, and with delight to prostrate themselves at the feet of God.

Legal humiliation has nothing in it spiritually good; whereas evangelical humiliation is that wherein the excellency of Christian grace very much consists. Legal humiliation is useful as a means in order to evangelical; as a common knowledge of religion is a means requisite in order to spiritual knowledge. We may be legally humbled while we have no humility; as the wicked, at the day of judgment, will be fully convinced that they have no righteousness, but are exceedingly guilty, and justly exposed to eternal damnation, without the least mortification of their pride. The essence of evangelical humility consists in such a self-renunciation, or abasement, as becomes a creature, in himself exceedingly sinful, under a dispensation of grace.

This frame of mind is a most essential circumstance in true religion. The whole constitution of the Gospel, every thing belonging to the new covenant, and all the dispensations of God toward fallen man, are calculated to produce this effect on the human heart. Those who are destitute of this have no true religion, whatever professions they make, or whatever their religious affections are. It is abundantly manifest in the

word of God, that humility is that state of mind in his people to which he has a particular respect, and without which nothing is acceptable to him. "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as" are "of a contrite spirit." Psalm 34 : 18. "Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly." Psalm 138 : 6. "He giveth grace unto the lowly." Prov. 3 : 34. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God." Matt. 5 : 3. "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter therein." Mark, 10 : 15. See also Psalm 51 : 17; Isaiah, 57 : 15; 66 : 1, 2; Micah, 6 : 8; Matt. 18 : 31. The centurion of whom we have an account in Luke, 7, acknowledged that he was not worthy that Christ should enter under his roof, or that he himself should come to him. Observe the manner in which the woman who was a notorious sinner came to Christ. She did not think the hair of her head, which is the natural crown and glory of a woman, too good to wipe the feet of her Redeemer. Jesus most graciously received her, and said to her, "Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace." The woman of Canaan, when Christ said to her, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs," admitted that she deserved to be so denominated; upon which Christ said to her, "O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Matt. 15 : 26-28. "And he spake this parable unto certain" persons who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others," &c. "The publican standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful unto me a sinner." Luke, 7 : 37, &c.; 1 Cor. 11 : 15. "I tell you,

this man went down to his house justified rather than the other," that is, the Pharisee; "for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Luke, 18 : 9, &c. "A new heart also will I give you; and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, &c. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways; and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations." Ezek. 36 : 26, 27, 31. "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord;" 16 : 63.

As we would therefore make the Holy Scriptures our rule in judging of the nature of true religion, and particularly of our own state, we should regard this humility as one of the most essential things pertaining to the character of a true Christian. This is the principal part of the great duty of self-denial—a duty consisting *first* in denying our worldly interests and gratifications; and *secondly* in renouncing all dependence on our own righteousness. The latter is the more difficult part of self-denial, for though they always go together, yet natural men approach much nearer to the former than the latter. Many anchorites and recluses have relinquished the wealth, and pleasures, and common enjoyments of the world, who were very far from renouncing their own righteousness. They never denied themselves for Christ, but only discarded one lust, that another might be more fully cherished and gratified. The strength of that self-righteous, self-exalting spirit, which is natural to man, is almost inconceivable. What will he not do in order to feed

and gratify this principle! What self-denial, in reference to some things, has been exercised by Essenes and Pharisees among the Jews; by Papists; by many sects of heretics and enthusiasts among professing Christians; by Mahomedans; and by Pythagorean philosophers, and others among the heathen; solely for the purpose of sacrificing to this Moloch of spiritual pride; and in order that they might have something in which to exalt themselves before God, above their fellow-men!

There is nothing in which those hypocrites, who make the most splendid show of mortification to the world and high religious affections, so much fail, as the humility spoken of above. They make great pretensions to humility, as well as to other graces; and very often there is nothing of which they make a greater profession. They seldom however so speak and act as to produce a savor of Christian humility in what they say and do. They can only declare how much they were humbled at some particular times, abounding very much in debasing expressions about themselves; such as, "I am the least of all the saints—I am not worthy of the least mercy, or that God should look upon me," &c. Such expressions are very often used by them, not with a humble spirit, but with pharisaical affectation. We must believe that they are *thus* humbled, and feel themselves *so* vile, upon the credit of their saying so; for there appears nothing in their deportment savoring of humility. There are many professors who are full of expressions of their own vileness, who, notwithstanding this, expect to be regarded by others as eminent saints. They exclaim against their wicked hearts, and unprofitable lives, and speak as though they regarded themselves as the near-

est of the people of God; but should a minister seriously tell them the same things in private—that he feared they were very low and weak Christians, and had reason solemnly to consider their unprofitableness, and how far they fell short of some of their brethren in spiritual attainments; they would think themselves highly injured, and would probably conceive a rooted prejudice against so faithful a friend.

There are some professors who are fluent in talking against legal doctrines, legal preaching, and a legal spirit, who little understand what they exclaim against. A legal spirit is a more subtle thing than we imagine: it is too subtle for them. It lurks, and operates, and prevails in their hearts, and they are most deeply possessed with it at the time that they are inveighing against it. So far as a man is not emptied of himself and of his own righteousness, in every form and shape, so far he is of a legal spirit. A spirit of pride as to our faith, humility, affections, experience, righteousness, or holiness, is a legal spirit. It was not pride in Adam before his fall, to be of a legal spirit; because in the circumstances in which he was placed, he might seek acceptance with God by his own righteousness. But a legal spirit, in a fallen creature, can be nothing but spiritual pride; and on the contrary, a proud spirit, however modified, is a legal spirit. Every man who is lifted up by an elevated opinion of his experience, trusts in that experience, and makes a righteousness of it; whatever humble language he may use with respect to himself, and though he attributes his discoveries to the operations of divine grace, and even calls upon others to glorify God for them. He who is proud of his experience arrogates something to himself, as though his experience were a kind of dignity of his

own. And if he regards it as conferring upon him a sort of importance, he believes that God views it in the same light; for he, of course, thinks his own judgment of it correct, and consequently supposes that God regards it as he does. And thus he trusts to what he himself possesses, to recommend him to God; and with this encouragement he goes before God in prayer, expecting much from him. This makes him think that Christ loves him, and that he has clothed him with the garment of salvation. This, in an eminent degree, is living on his own righteousness; and persons who thus live are in the high road to everlasting perdition. Deluded creatures! they think that they appear amiable in the eyes of God, when they are a smoke in his nose; and, many of them, more odious than the most profligate persons who make no pretensions to religion!

There are professors who exclaim against legality, and talk much about faith as opposed to works; who exalt themselves as more evangelical in their sentiments than their brethren; but who are indeed among the greatest enemies of the doctrines of free grace, and the most dangerous opposers of pure Christianity.

There is a pretended humility—a professed deadness to the law, which is one of the proudest things in the world. There are some persons who make great professions of having experienced a thorough work of the law on their hearts, and of being brought fully from dependence on their own works; whose conversation savours more of a self-righteous spirit, than that of any other description of persons with whom I have had an opportunity of being acquainted. And some who think themselves quite emptied of self, and abased in the dust, are as full as possible of pride: they are lifted up with a high opinion of their humility and self-abasc-

ment. Their humility, to use very improper terms, is a confident, showy, assuming humility. It appears to be the nature of spiritual pride, to make professors ostentatious with respect to this grace.

To be truly emptied of self—to be poor in spirit—to be broken in heart, is quite another thing, and has quite other effects from what many persons imagine. It is astonishing to observe how many are deceived about themselves as to this matter, imagining that they are very humble, when they are very proud, and their behavior very haughty. The deceitfulness of the human heart appears in nothing so much as in spiritual pride and self-righteousness. The subtlety of Satan is most eminent in his management of persons as to these sins. Here perhaps he has most experience: he is acquainted with the secret springs of pride: it was his own prevailing sin.

But though spiritual pride is so subtle, and in general appears under a pretext of great humility; yet there are two things by which it may be discovered, perhaps with certainty.

1. He who is under the prevalence of this spirit, *in comparing himself with others, is apt to think highly of his own attainments in religion.* It is natural for him to conceive of himself as an eminent saint, distinguished by great experience. "God, I thank thee," says he, "that I am not as other men." Luke, 18 : 2. And "I am holier than thou." Isaiah, 65 : 5. Hence such persons are apt to put themselves forward among the people of God, to take a high seat among them, Luke, 14 : 7, &c. as if there was no doubt of its belonging to them. They are forward to take upon themselves the place and business of the chief: to teach, to direct, and to manage. They take it for granted that it belongs to

them, to act the part of dictators; and they expect that others should look up to them, and yield to them, as masters in matters of religion.

But he whose heart is under the influence of humility, is of a contrary disposition. He is inclined to regard his attainments in religion as comparatively small, and to esteem himself as one of the least of the saints. True lowliness of mind disposes persons to think others better than themselves. Phil. 2 : 3. Hence it is that real Christians are apt to think that the lowest place belongs to them. Luke, 14 : 10. They are not inclined to take upon themselves the office of teachers ; but, on the contrary, are disposed to think that others are fitter for it than they are. This was the case with Moses and Jeremiah, though they were eminent saints. Exodus, 3 : 11 ; Jer. 1 : 6. Persons who are really humble, are more eager to hear, and to receive instruction, than to dictate to others. James, 1 : 19. And when they do speak, it is not with an arrogant, domineering air, but with humility and diffidence. Hos. 13 : 1. They do not assume authority, but are rather subject to others : “ All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility.” 1 Pet. 5 : 5. See also James 3 : 1 ; Eph. 5 : 21.

We may, however, speak of our experience as great and extraordinary in a proper spirit. Every degree of saving grace is a great blessing, yea, infinitely great ; and the more humble we are, trusting that God has bestowed such mercy upon us, the more shall we be disposed to entertain exalted ideas of the favor we have received. But if, by great experience, we mean that our experience is *comparatively* great or excellent in contrast with that of other christians, it is the same thing as saying, we are eminent saints ; we have more

grace than other persons. To have great experience in reality is to have much grace, as there is no experience but the exercise of grace; and exactly according to the degree of real experience, is the degree of grace and holiness. Those who are inclined to boast of their experience, expect that they should be admired. They do not regard this as a sign of spiritual pride, because their discoveries, they tell us, were not of themselves—they were the effects of free grace—and they only wish to acknowledge the great mercy of God toward them. In words, the Pharisee gave God the glory of making him to differ from other men: “God, I thank thee that I am not as other men:” Their ascribing it to the grace of God that they are holier than others, is no proof that the disposition of some professors to think highly of their holiness, does not arise from the pride and vanity of their minds. If they were under the influence of a humble spirit, their attainments in religion would not appear so brilliant in their own eyes. Those who are really the most eminent saints, and therefore have the most satisfactory experience, and are greatest in the kingdom of heaven, humble themselves as little children. Matt. 18: 4. They regard themselves as little children in grace, and their attainments as those of babes in Christ. They are ashamed that they feel so little love and gratitude toward God, and have so little knowledge of him. Moses, when he had been conversing with God on the mount, and his face shone so bright as to dazzle the eyes of others, “wist not that his face shone.”

Such is the nature of grace, that it disposes the saints to regard their goodness as little, and their imperfections as great. Those who possess the most grace, possess likewise the most of this disposition. To a

truly gracious person, his spiritual attainments will appear small in comparison with what they ought to be. Such a one looks to the rule of his duty ; conformity to this is what his soul reaches after ; and it is by this that he estimates what he does, and what he possesses. To a gracious soul, and especially to one eminently gracious, his holiness appears little in comparison with the obligations under which he is laid. True spiritual light presents to a person's view his obligation to be holy in the highest degree ; and the more grace he possesses, the more clearly is this obligation presented to his view. As grace increases, this view extends itself, until the soul is swallowed up by the vastness of the obligation, and astonished at the small degree in which this obligation is discharged. Deeply affected by the smallness of his attainments, he can scarcely conceive that any thing similar has occurred in the experience of other saints. It is amazing to him that a child of God—one who has actually received the saving benefits of the unspeakable love of Christ, should love no more ; and he is disposed to regard this circumstance as peculiar to himself, a strange and solitary instance of insensibility and ingratitude.

Here the reader may perhaps object, that love to God is really increased, in proportion as the knowledge of God is increased ; and, therefore, he may ask, how should an increase of knowledge make the love of a saint appear less to himself in comparison with what is known ? To this I answer, that although grace, or the love of God in the saints, is in proportion to their knowledge of God ; yet it bears no proportion to the majesty and glory of the object seen and known. A saint, by having something of God presented to his view, is convinced of much more than he sees. What

is perceived is wonderful, but this view brings with it a strong conviction of something vastly superior to what is seen; so that the soul, at the same time, is astonished that it knows so little, as well as that it loves so little. And as the soul is convinced of the existence of infinitely more than it yet perceives, so it is convinced that it possesses a capacity of knowing vastly more than it yet knows. In consequence of this, it complains greatly of spiritual ignorance, and want of love; and longs and strives for more knowledge and more love.

Grace, or the love of God, in the most eminent saints in this world, is indeed small in comparison with what it ought to be. The most ardent love that is ever possessed in this life, is exceedingly cold in comparison with our obligations. This appears from the consideration of two things:

(1.) The manifestations which God has made of his infinite love toward mankind; and,

(2.) The capacity which he has given us of understanding our obligations to love him. From these considerations, the love of the most eminent saint on earth appears indeed cold in comparison with his obligations; and of this, grace, in proportion as it prevails, tends to convince him; for grace is of the nature of light, and presents truth to our view. He who is possessed of the greatest portion of grace, is the most clearly convinced of the height to which his affections should ascend, and is the most deeply affected with the low degree in which they are exercised. And therefore, estimating his love by the extent of his obligation, he is astonished at its smallness.

The eminent saint, having such a view of the high degree in which he ought to love God, perceives more

clearly, not only the smallness of his grace, but the greatness of his remaining corruption. In order to ascertain how much depravity or sin remains within us, we must regard that height to which the rule of our duty extends: the whole of the distance between that elevation and our affections is sin; for in exact proportion as we fall short of our duty, we sin, and evidence the depravity of our hearts. Sin is an abominable defect, and appears so to the saints, especially to those who are eminent saints.

An increase of grace leads us to view our moral depravity to be far greater than our holiness, as it exhibits the deformity existing in the least sin, or in the least degree of depravity. The most inconsiderable sin against an infinite God, is infinitely hateful, and possesses infinite deformity; but the highest degree of holiness in a creature is not infinitely lovely; and therefore that loveliness is as nothing in comparison with the deformity of the least sin. That every sin possesses infinite deformity, and is infinitely hateful, may be easily demonstrated. The evil or malignity of sin consists in its violating an obligation; in our being what we ought not to be, or in our doing what we ought not to do; and therefore, in proportion to the greatness of the obligation which is violated, is the magnitude of the guilt contracted. Again; our obligation to love and honor any being is in proportion to his loveliness and worthiness to be honored by us. If therefore a being is infinitely lovely, then our obligations to love him are infinitely great; and consequently whatever is contrary to this love possesses infinite deformity and iniquity. But, on the other hand, there is not an infinite worthiness in our holiness, or love to God. The demerit and hatefulness of our sins are

great in proportion to the distance subsisting between us and God ; but our worthiness in his sight is small in proportion to our meanness. As far as we are from God, morally considered, so far is our goodness unworthy of his notice. A great degree of superiority increases the obligation on the part of the inferior, and renders the violation of that obligation more hateful; but a great degree of inferiority diminishes the worth of the services rendered by an inferior, for a person can offer no more than himself, and therefore, if he is worthless, his services must also be worthless. And the more a person possesses of true grace and spiritual light, the more will he feel his infinite deformity as a sinner, and the want of moral beauty in his graces and experience. Indeed, our goodness, comparatively, is less than a drop in the ocean, for finite bears no proportion to infinite; and the more spiritual light we possess, the more do things appear, in this respect, as they really are. Hence it is evident that true grace is of such a nature, that the more a person possesses of it, the less does his moral beauty appear in comparison with his deformity.

The tendency of high religious affections, in some persons with whom I have been acquainted, is to hide the depravity of their hearts, and to leave them without complaint as to the remains of moral depravity. This is a certain proof that their discoveries, as they call them, proceed from darkness and not from light. It is true that saving discoveries may, for the present, hide depravity, as they restrain its positive exercises. They do, however, bring it to light as to what is deficient—our want of love, of humility, of gratitude, &c. These defects appear most hateful in the view of those who are most eminently gracious; and whatever posi-

tive effects of depravity at any time appear, and mingle themselves with the actings of grace, they will, from these circumstances, be exceedingly magnified, and rendered far more detestable.

I would not, however, be understood to mean, that the saints on earth have, in all respects, the worst opinion of themselves when they possess most of the exercise of grace. In many respects the case is otherwise. As to the positive effects of depravity, it will be evident to the real Christian that he is freest from them when grace is most in exercise, and least so when the actings of grace are most feeble. And when he compares his experience at one time with his experience at another, he will be convinced, that when grace is in lively exercise, it is better with him than when he is in a dull and languid frame. When he sinks in the frame of his mind he will be sensible of the declension, and thus have a striking proof of his remaining depravity. But still it is evident, from the considerations already mentioned, that the children of God never have such *spiritual* views of their deformity and vileness, as when they possess most of the exercise of true grace; and are never so much disposed to place themselves low amongst Christians, as when they are living near to God. Thus, he who is greatest in the kingdom of Christ, is the least in his own estimation. Matt. 18 : 4.

A real saint, agreeable to what has already been observed, may know that he possesses true grace; and the more grace he possesses, the more easily may he arrive at this important knowledge. But still it does not follow that an eminent saint is particularly sensible that he is an eminent saint compared with others. I will not deny that he who possesses much grace, and is eminently holy, may know that he is thus distin-

guished; but it will not be obvious to him that he is better than others, so that this supposition should become a foremost thought—a something which, from time to time, readily occurs to his mind. It may be remarked as infallibly true, *that the person who, upon comparing himself with others, is apt to think himself a very eminent saint, much distinguished in Christian experience—in whom this is a leading thought, often recurring—is certainly mistaken: he is no eminent saint, but under the prevalence of a proud, self-righteous spirit.* And if this is habitually the prevailing temper of his mind, he is no saint at all; and as certain as the word of God is true, he has not the least degree of true Christian experience.

That experience which puffs up with pride, is certainly false and delusive. Those discoveries which fill us with admiration of our supposed eminence and superiority, possess nothing of true spiritual light. The more a person has of real spiritual knowledge, the more is he sensible of his own ignorance. 1 Cor. 8 : 2. Agur, when favored with a clear discovery of the glory of God, had at the same time a deep sense of his own ignorance. Prov. 30 : 2-4.

For a man to be proud of his spiritual knowledge, is the same as being wise in his own eyes, a state of mind forbidden in Scripture. Prov. 3 : 7, and Rom. 12 : 16, and against which the following wo is pronounced: "Wo unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight." Isaiah, 5 : 21. Those who are thus proud of their supposed knowledge, are the least likely to receive spiritual benefit from the means of grace. "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him." Prov. 26 : 12.

2. Another infallible sign of spiritual pride, is a disposition to *think highly of our humility*. False experience is in general attended by counterfeit humility; and it is the very nature of this kind of humility to be exceedingly proud of itself. But eminently gracious affections always possess a contrary tendency, and universally produce contrary effects. They make us very sensible what reason we have to be deeply humbled, and cause us earnestly to long for greater degrees of humility; they make our present attainments in this grace appear very small, and our remaining pride exceedingly great, and in the highest degree abominable.

Every one who has been much conversant with persons under convictions of sin, well knows that those who are deeply convinced of sin, are not apt to think that they are so. And the reason is this: they judge of the degree of their convictions by their sense of guilt and pollution, compared with what they conceive to be the degree of their real sinfulness. It is no proof of deep convictions of guilt in some men to think themselves sinful beyond most others, because they are really so; and therefore a far slighter conviction may induce such individuals to form this conclusion, than would be required to produce a similar conviction in the minds of others. But he who is truly under deep convictions of sin, naturally thinks himself the chief of sinners. It appears to him that he has greater cause to be sensible of guilt and pollution than others have; and therefore he ascribes his convictions, not to the greatness of his spiritual sensibility, but to the number and magnitude of his transgressions. It is natural for one who is under convictions of sin, to think himself one of the greatest of sinners in reality,

and that he is such very evidently ; and the deeper his convictions are, the more will he feel of this persuasion. That he is the chief of sinners appears to himself so obvious, that he believes very slight convictions only are requisite in order to perceive it. That man is under deep convictions whose convictions are deep in comparison with his sins ; but no man who is truly under deep convictions, thinks his convictions deep in comparison with his sins. For if he does, of course he thinks his sins small ; and wherever this is the case, it is certain that convictions of sin are slight. And this in reality is the principal reason why persons, when under a work of spiritual humiliation, are not sensible of it at the time.

As it is with convictions of guilt, so it is with convictions of meanness, ignorance, inability, &c. In the exercise of evangelical humiliation the believer is never disposed to regard his sense of his own meanness as great, because it never appears so to him, considering his obligation to abasement.

An eminent saint is not disposed to think himself eminent in any thing : all his experience and graces appear to him comparatively small, especially his humility. There is nothing belonging to his experience so much out of his sight as this grace. He is far more ready in discerning his pride than his humility : he easily discovers the former, but scarcely perceives the latter. On the contrary, the deluded hypocrite, under the influence of spiritual pride, is not so blind to any thing as to his pride ; nor so quick-sighted to any thing as to his apparent humility.

The humble Christian is more disposed to find fault with his own pride, than with that of others. He is disposed to put the best construction on the words and

behavior of others, as they regard this spirit, and to think none so proud as himself. But the proud hypocrite is quick at discerning the mote in his brother's eye, while he perceives nothing of the beam that is in his own eye. He is very often exclaiming against the pride of others; finding fault with their apparel and way of living; and is much more affected with his neighbor's ring or ribband, than with all the filthiness of his own heart.

In consequence of the disposition of hypocrites to think highly of their abasement, counterfeit humility is always forward to present itself to view. Those who possess apparent humility are inclined to boast of it, and to make an exhibition of it in some affected singularity. So it was with the false prophets of old, (Zech. 13 : 4,) with the hypocritical Jews, (Isaiah, 57 : 9,) and with the Pharisees in particular. Matt. 6 : 16. But it is quite otherwise with real humility : those who are truly self-abased make no display of their humility; nor do they at all affect singularity in dress or manner: "But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face." Matt. 6 : 17. "Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship and humility." Col. 2 : 23. Real humility is not noisy. A penitent, in the exercise of self-abasement, is represented as still and silent: "He sitteth alone, and keepeth silence." Lam. 3 : 28. "If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, lay thine hand upon thy mouth." Prov. 30 : 32.

Reader, let these observations be applied to yourself. Though you admit it as a bad sign for a person to be apt to think himself better than others, there may still exist a strong prejudice in your own favor; and there may perhaps be need of great strictness of self-exami-

nation, in reference to your own state. If, on reading these observations, you are disposed to say, "It appears to me that none are so bad as I am," do not let the matter rest here, but examine again. Perhaps you think yourself better than others on this very account. Have you not a high opinion of your humility? Perhaps you will reply to this, "No, I have not a high opinion of my humility; it seems to me that I am as proud as Lucifer." Still, I say, examine again; self-exaltation may rest under this covering, and you may think yourself very humble, because, as you imagine, you think yourself very proud.

A truly humble person, having such a mean opinion of himself, is poor in spirit. He naturally behaves himself in many respects as a poor man: "The poor useth entreaties, but the rich answereth roughly." A poor man, in the company of the rich, is not resentful, not obstinate and self-willed; he is content with mean fare; and as he expects to be despised, he endures such treatment patiently; he is not offended that he is overlooked, or but little regarded, and is always prepared to take the lowest place; he receives reproof with meekness, and readily honors others as better than himself; he is willing to be taught, and claims no deference for his own understanding and judgment; he is not fastidious, assuming, or disposed to take much upon himself.

A man who is very poor, is usually a mendicant; so is he who is poor in spirit, exceedingly needy, and a beggar continually at the gates of divine mercy. False affections lead persons to esteem themselves rich, increased in goods, and having need of nothing.

A poor man is modest in his language and his behavior; a man, poor in spirit, is much more so. It is

in vain for any person to pretend that he is humble, and as a little child before God, when in his general behavior he is haughty, assuming, and imperious.

The apostle informs us that the design of the Gospel is to exclude all glorying, not only before God, but also before men. Rom. 4 : 1, 2. Some persons make great pretensions to humility, who are very haughty and assuming in their behavior : they ought consider the following passages of Scripture : “ These six things doth the Lord hate ; yea, seven are an abomination to him ; a proud look,” &c. Prov. 6 : 16, 17. “ Him that hath a high look, and a proud heart, will not suffer.” Psalm 101 : 5. The Scriptures speak of a kind of amiable modesty, arising from humility, which adorns the Christian character : “ Be ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.” 1 Pet. 3 : 15. “ With fear and trembling you received him.” 2 Cor. 7 : 15. In this respect a Christian is like a little child, diffident and modest.

The same spirit will dispose a Christian to honor all men. A humble believer is not only disposed to show respect to the saints, but to others also, as far as he can without giving countenance to their sins. Thus Abraham, the great pattern of believers, honored the children of Heth : “ And Abraham bowed himself down before the people of the land.” Gen. 23 : 12. This was a remarkable instance of humble behavior toward those whom Abraham knew to be accursed, and from among whom, therefore, he would by no means suffer his servant to take a wife for his son. So Paul honored Festus : “ I am not mad, most noble Festus.” Acts, 26 : 25. Christian humility will not only dispose us to honor those wicked men who are out of

the visible church, but also false brethren and persecutors. Jacob, having been wrestling all night with God, and having received the blessing of Jehovah, honored Esau, his false and persecuting brother: Jacob "bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother Esau." Gen. 33 : 3. He called him lord, and commanded all his family to honor him in the same manner.

Thus have I endeavored to describe, according to Scripture, the disposition and behavior of one who is governed by a truly gracious humility. Now it is from such a disposition as this that all truly holy affections flow. True Christian love, both to God and to men, is a humble love; the desires of the saints, however earnest, are humble desires; their hope is a humble hope; and their joy, even when it is unspeakable and full of glory, is a humble joy. The real Christian under the influence of a spirit of humility, becomes more and more like a little child, and more and more disposed to universal lowliness of behavior.

VII. Gracious affections are attended by *a change of nature or disposition.*

According to what has been already shown, all gracious affections arise from the understanding being spiritually enlightened as to the excellency and glory of divine things. But all spiritual discoveries are transforming, and not only produce a change in the present sensations and exercises of the soul, but in its moral state: "But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. 3 18. This power is peculiar to "the

Spirit of the Lord." Through the influence of other agents, our present feelings may be altered, but it is only by the gracious operations of the Creator that our nature can be changed. No discoveries or illuminations, but those which are supernatural and divine, will produce this effect.

The scriptures, speaking of conversion, use terms which strongly imply, or very clearly express a change of nature or disposition: they speak of our being born again; becoming new creatures; being renewed in the spirit of the mind; dying to sin, and living to righteousness; putting off the old man, and putting on the new man; of being grafted into a new stock; of being made partakers of the divine nature, &c.

If, therefore, there is no great and abiding change in persons who profess to have experienced the work of conversion, they are certainly deceived. Conversion, if we ought to give any credit to Scripture, is a universal change of disposition, a real turning of the soul from sin unto God. A man may be restrained from sin, before he is converted; but, having experienced that gracious change, he is not only restrained from sin, but made to hate it. If, therefore, the high affections of the supposed convert have so declined, that there is now no remarkable alteration in him, and he is in general under the prevailing influence of the same dispositions as before; if he appears as selfish and carnal, as lukewarm and anti-christian as ever; these circumstances afford such powerful evidence against him, that the finest story about experience that could possibly be told, would be regarded by the judicious Christian as possessing no value. For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision, nor uncircumcision; neither a forward profession, nor a diffident one; neither a fine

story about experience, nor a poor one, avails any thing; but only a new creature.

If, for a time, there seems to be a great change in any particular person, but that change afterward disappears, it is evident that there has been no change of nature or disposition. A swine may be washed, but its swinish nature will still remain.

Allowance must be made for natural temper: conversion does not completely eradicate constitutional peculiarities; those sins to which a man was naturally most inclined before his conversion, will be most likely to ensnare him afterward. Yet conversion effects a great change, even with respect to constitutional propensities; and though grace, whilst we are in this world, does not entirely destroy, yet, in a great measure, it corrects or subdues bad natural temper. The change wrought in conversion is universal, with respect to whatever is sinful: the old man is put off, the new man is put on. The subject of this change is sanctified throughout; he is made a new creature; old things are passed away, and all things are become new; all sin is mortified, constitutional sins as well as others. If a man, before his conversion, was, by his natural constitution, strongly inclined to any particular sin, converting grace will make a great change in him with respect to that propensity; so that, though he may be still most in danger from that particular sin, it will no longer have dominion over him; nor will it in future be that from which he properly takes his character. True repentance, in some respects, turns a man more particularly against those sins by which he has most dishonoured God. He who discards other sins, but retains that to which he is constitutionally inclined, is like Saul when sent against the enemies of God, (the

Amalekites,) with a strict charge to save none of them alive, but utterly to destroy them, small and great. He destroyed the people, but saved the king.

Some persons foolishly argue that their religious affections are gracious, because when they subside, no spiritual life is experienced. They think it is evident that what they experience is wholly of God, "because," say they, "when God is departed, we see and feel nothing spiritually, and are no better than we used to be." It is true that all the grace possessed by the saints is derived entirely and immediately from God; but these persons are mistaken, as to the manner in which he communicates his Holy Spirit, and imparts saving grace to the soul. He gives his Spirit to be united to the faculties of the soul, and to *dwell there* as a principle of spiritual life and activity. He not only actuates the soul, but he abides in it. The mind, thus endowed with grace, is possessed of a new nature. The saints do not only drink of the water that flows from the fountain of life; but this water becomes in them a fountain springing up there, and flowing from thence. John, 4 : 14 ; 7 : 38, 39. Grace is compared to a seed not only sown in the ground, but as having root and growing there.

As it is with spiritual discoveries and affections at conversion, so it is with all illuminations and affections afterwards: they are all transforming. They continue to possess the same energy as at the first; and they penetrate, and affect, and alter the very disposition of the soul, in proportion to the degree in which they are communicated. A transformation of disposition, is carried on by divine grace to the end of life, until it is made perfect in everlasting glory. Hence the progress of this work is represented in Scripture as a con-

tinued conversion, or renovation of nature. The Apostle Paul exhorts the saints at Rome to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. Rom. 12 : 1, 2. And in writing to the faithful in Christ Jesus at Ephesus, he tells them, that he ceased not to pray for them, that God would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Christ; the eyes of their understandings being opened, that they might know, or experience, what was the exceeding greatness of the power of God towards them that believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places. Eph. 1 : 16, &c. In this passage the Apostle has respect to the power of God in converting and renewing the soul. He also exhorts the same persons to put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and to be renewed, in the spirit of their minds; and to put on the new man, who, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness. Eph. 4 : 22—24.

There is a kind of high affection which some persons experience, which afterwards leaves them without the appearance of any abiding effect. The impression passes away, so that a degree of rapture is soon exchanged for spiritual languor and inactivity. It is not thus with high gracious affections; they leave a sweet savor and relish of divine things, and a stronger bent of soul toward God and holiness. The face of Moses not only shone while he was on the Mount, conversing with God, but it continued to shine after he had come down. When men have been conversing with Christ, the evidence of this intercourse remains on them; there is something remarkable in their dispositions and frame of mind, which shows that they have been with Jesus. Acts 4 : 13.

VIII. Gracious affections are attended by the *meek and benevolent spirit, which was manifested by Jesus Christ.*

If we judge of the nature of Christianity by the word of God, this spirit and temper must be regarded as forming the true and distinguishing disposition of all real Christians; it is the spirit by which they are so governed that they take from it their proper character and denomination. This is evident from the description which Christ gives of the temper of those who are truly blessed: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the peace makers, for they shall be called the children of God." Matt. 5 : 5, 7, 9. This is the spirit by which the elect are distinguished: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another." Col. 3: 12, 13. The apostle, speaking of that temper or disposition, without which none are true Christians, describes it thus: "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not" easily "puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil." 1 Cor. 13: 4, 5. Describing the characteristic marks of true Christian grace, the same apostle chiefly insists upon what belongs to such a spirit and temper as those of which I am speaking: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Gal. 5: 22, 23. The Apostle James, speaking of that wisdom which

is from above, says, "If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife" are, "there is confusion, and every evil work. But the wisdom" which "is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits." James, 3: 14—17.

Every thing that belongs to holiness of heart, belongs also to the nature of true religion; but the spirit of holiness, as appearing in some particular graces, may more especially be called the Christian spirit or temper. There are some virtues which, in a peculiar manner, agree with the nature and design of the Gospel constitution, and which were more particularly exercised by Jesus Christ in the work of redemption. These virtues are such as humility, meekness, mercy, forgiveness, and love; they therefore belong, in a very special manner, to the Christian character.

These virtues are represented as forming the character of Christ himself, the great Head of the Christian church: "Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold thy King cometh unto thee, meek and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass." Matt. 21: 5. "Learn of me," said the Redeemer himself, "for I am meek and lowly in heart." This temper is also evidently implied in the name by which Christ is so often called in Scripture—THE LAMB. And as these virtues are especially characteristic of Christ, so they are also characteristic of Christians. Christians are Christ-like. None deserve to bear the name who do not exhibit the likeness of Christ: the new man is renewed after the image of him that creates him. Col. 3: 10. The elect were predestinated to be conformed to the

image of the Son of God, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Rom. 8 : 29. Christ is full of grace, and all Christians receive of his fullness grace for grace: there is grace in Christians answering to grace in Christ, such a correspondence as there is between the wax and the seal, the same kind of graces, and such a spirit and temper. Christians who shine by reflecting the light of the Sun of Righteousness, shine with the same kind of brightness, the same mild, benignant beams. Those lamps of the spiritual temple which are kindled by fire from heaven, burn with the same kind of flame. It would be strange if Christians were not of the same temper and spirit as Christ, when they live so that it is not they that live, but Christ that liveth in them. A Christian spirit is the mark which Christ sets upon the souls of his people: his seal in their foreheads, bearing his image and superscription. Christians are followers, or imitators of Christ; and they are so in proportion as they learn of him, who is meek and lowly of heart. True Christians are distinguished by the meek and loving temper of Christ; for as many as are in Christ, have put on Christ. Rom. 13 : 14. The church is not only clothed with his righteousness, but also adorned with his graces.

That the virtue here spoken of, is of the very nature of the Christian spirit, is evident from this—the dove is the symbol chosen of God to represent it. The Spirit that descended on Christ when he was anointed of the Father, descended on him “like a dove.” Now the dove is an emblem of meekness, innocence, peace, and love. But the same Spirit that descended on Christ, the Head of the church, descends also on the members: “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” Rom. 8 : 9.

Meekness is so much the character of the saints, that the words *meek* and *godly* are used in Scripture as synonymous terms. The wicked and the meek are set in opposition to each other. "Yet a little while and the wicked shall not be; but the meek shall inherit the earth." Psalm 37 : 11. "The Lord lifteth up the meek; he casteth the wicked down to the ground." Psalm 147 : 6.

It is, without doubt, principally on this account that Christ represents the heirs of heaven as little children: "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 19 : 14. Little children are meek, and though irritated, their anger is of short continuance. They do not cherish resentment, or entertain deep-rooted malice. They are ingenuous and sincere; strangers to all disguise. They are pliant, diffident of their own understanding, relying on the instructions of their parents and teachers. They present therefore a fit emblem of the followers of the Lamb.

But here some may be ready to inquire, is there no such thing as *Christian intrepidity or fortitude*? To this I reply, there doubtless is. The whole of a Christian's life is very properly compared to a warfare. The most eminent Christians are the best soldiers, endued with the greatest degree of Christian courage. Many persons appear to be mistaken as to the nature of Christian courage. It is very different from brutal fierceness. It consists in strength of mind exerted through grace: first, in ruling and subduing our evil passions; and, secondly, in steadfastly exercising holy dispositions without regarding opposition. But the passions which are restrained in the exercise of Chris-

tian courage are those very passions which are vigorously exerted in unsanctified boldness; and those affections which are vigorously exerted in holy intrepidity, are in direct opposition to the unhallowed passions of carnal men. Though Christian courage is exerted in opposing the enemies which are without us, yet it is chiefly exerted in opposing those which are within us. The fortitude of a good soldier of Jesus Christ appears in nothing more than in steadfastly maintaining a holy calmness, meekness, and benevolence of mind, amidst all the injurious behavior of this prejudiced and persecuting world. "He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city." Prov. 16 : 33.

The most certain way of forming a right judgment as to the nature of holy fortitude, is to look to the Captain of the host of God; our great leader and example, and observe wherein his courage and fortitude appeared, when he obtained that glorious victory, which will be celebrated in the praises and triumphs of the hosts of heaven throughout eternity. He did not give vent to angry passions, or vehement declamations against his persecutors; he opened not his mouth when oppressed; he went as a lamb to the slaughter, praying that his Father would forgive his enemies, because they knew not what they did. When one of his disciples, who professed great zeal and boldness for his Master, declaring that he would sooner die with him than deny him, began to use his sword, he meekly rebuked him, and healed the wound which had been given. If therefore we see any of the followers of Christ, in the midst of the most violent, unreasonable, and wicked opposition, maintaining the humility and

gentleness of the Lamb, in union with the harmlessness and affection of the dove, we may at once conclude that they are good soldiers of Jesus Christ. When persons are fierce, and express violent passions, they manifest weakness rather than fortitude.

There is a kind of boldness which arises from pride. From this principle a man may be forward to expose himself to the dislike of the world, and even to provoke its opposition. It is the nature of spiritual pride to affect singularity, and to court distinction. Proud professors often place themselves in a state of warfare with those whom they call carnal, that they may be more highly esteemed among their own party. True Christian fortitude is universal, bearing us above the displeasure of friends, as well as of enemies; so that, influenced by this spirit, if called to make the sacrifice, we should forsake all rather than Christ. That duty which ascertains whether a man is willing to be despised by his own party, is a much more proper test of his religious fortitude, than his being forward to expose himself to the reproach of enemies. The apostle sought not glory either of the heathens, or of the Jews, or of the Christians. 1 Thess. 2 : 6. He is bold for Christ who has fortitude enough to confess his fault openly, even before his opposers, when he has committed one that requires such confession. Such conduct as this is a far more decisive evidence of holy courage, than resolutely and fiercely opposing our enemies.

As some persons are mistaken respecting the nature of Christian courage, so are they as to the nature of *evangelical zeal*. It is indeed a flame, but it is a mild one; or rather it is the heat and fervor of divine love, or Christian charity: the most benevolent principle

that can exist in the heart of man, or of angel. It ardently and vigorously flows out toward its object; and so, of course, in opposition to whatever is contrary to that object. It stimulates, indeed, to vigorous opposition, but it is rather against sin than sinners. Bitterness against the persons of men is no part of its nature but quite the contrary; for the warmer true zeal is, and the higher it is raised, so much the further are we from such a spirit as this, and so much the more are we filled with love, both to the evil and to the good. This appears from what has just now been observed, that true zeal, in its very nature and essence, is the fervor of Christian love. And as to what opposition it possesses to sin, it is primarily and chiefly against the iniquity of our own hearts. There is therefore nothing in true Christian zeal opposed to that spirit of meekness, gentleness, and love—that spirit of a little child which has been spoken of; but, on the contrary, every thing perfectly agreeable to its nature, and tending to promote its increase.

But in speaking more particularly upon the Christian temper and spirit, I would observe that the Scriptures very clearly and expressly enforce the absolute necessity of mercy, forgiveness and love, as exercises belonging essentially to the disposition and character of every Christian.

The Scriptures are as decisive as possible in asserting that none are true saints but those who are of a disposition to *pity* and *relieve* the indigent and afflicted: “The righteous showeth mercy, and giveth.” Psalm 37 : 21. “He is ever merciful, and lendeth,” verse 26. “He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor.” Psalm 112 : 9. “He judged the cause of the poor and needy: was not this to know me? saith the

Lord." Jer. 22 : 16. " Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction," &c. James, 1 : 27. " Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Matt. 5 : 7. For he shall have judgment, without mercy, that hath showed no mercy. What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? If a brother or a sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say, " Depart in peace, be you warmed and filled," though " ye give not" him " those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" James, 2 : 13-16. " Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" 1 John, 3 : 17. Christ, in the description of the day of judgment, represents the different sentences as being passed, according as men have been merciful or otherwise. His design in giving this description is evidently to impress our minds with a conviction that, unless this is our spirit and practice, we can have no hope of being owned and accepted by him at that day. In Scripture, the terms, a righteous man, and a merciful man, are synonymous expressions: " The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come." Isaiah, 57 : 1.

As to a *forgiving spirit*, or a disposition to overlook injuries, Christ urges its importance both negatively and positively. He expressly declares, that if we are of such a spirit, it is an evidence that our sins are forgiven; and that if we are not of such a spirit, it is a proof that they are not forgiven. He seems to take special care that we should notice this, and always

bear it in our minds: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," is the petition which he taught his disciples; and then he adds, "For, if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Matt. 6 : 12, 14, 15.

That all true saints are of a *loving, benevolent* disposition, the Scriptures abundantly affirm. Without this, the apostle tells us, though we should speak with the tongues of men and of angels, we are as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal; and though we have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, we are nothing. This disposition is very often mentioned in the New Testament as a distinguishing characteristic of the disciples of Christ, and that by which they may be known to be such, both to themselves, and by others. Christ calls the law of love, by way of eminence, his commandment: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another." John, 13 : 34. "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." John, 15 : 12. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." John, 13 : 35. The beloved disciple, who had so much of this temper himself, abundantly insists upon its importance. None of the sacred writers are so express in reference to the evidence of grace as he is; and he insists scarcely upon any evidence of grace, but a spirit of Christian love, and a corresponding practice: "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling

in him." 1 John, 2 : 9, 10. " We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren : he that loveth not his brother, abideth in death." Chap. 3 : 14. See also verses 18, 19, 23, 24. " Beloved, let us love one another ; for love is of God, and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God ; for God is love." Chap. 4 : 7, 8. " If we love one another, God dwelleth in us. Hereby we know that we dwell in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar ; for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen ?" Verses 12, 13, 16, 20.

Hence it is abundantly evident from Scripture, that those who are truly gracious are under the government of the meek and benevolent spirit of Jesus Christ ; and that this disposition is essential to the nature of saving grace, and is the proper spirit of true Christianity. We may therefore conclude, without hesitation, that all truly Christian affections are attended by such a spirit ; and that this is the natural tendency of the fear and the hope, the sorrow and the joy, the confidence and the zeal of every true Christian.

Let no one conclude, however, that true Christians have no remains of a contrary spirit, and that they never, in any instance, act contrary to such a disposition. But I do affirm, that every thing belonging to true religion is of this tendency ; and that there is no true Christian but who is so under the prevailing power of such a spirit, that he is properly denominated from it, and that it really forms his character. Ministers and others have, therefore, no warrant to encourage

persons of a contrary character and behavior to think that they are converted, because they tell a plausible story about illuminations and discoveries. Some place religion so much in illuminations, and certain transient impressions, and so little in the prevailing spirit and temper, that they greatly misrepresent it, and exhibit Christianity as if it were quite different from what it is as delineated in the sacred writings. The Scriptures know nothing of selfish, ill-tempered, and contentious Christians. A greater absurdity cannot be thought of, than a morose, hard-hearted, covetous, proud, malicious Christian. We should endeavor to bring men to the rules of the word of God, and not so to stretch those rules, in order to include ourselves and our friends, as to make them of no effect.

It is true that allowances must be made for natural temper, but not such allowances as admit that those who were wolves and serpents are now converted, while there is no remarkable change in their spirit and dispositions. The change made by conversion is, in general, most remarkable with respect to that sin to which the person was most addicted. Grace has as great a tendency to restrain and mortify those sins which are contrary to the spirit mentioned above, as it has to mortify drunkenness or lasciviousness. The Scriptures represent the change wrought by the Gospel, as appearing more particularly in a change of spirit and temper: "The wolf—shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and

the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Isaiah, 11 : 6-9. See also Isaiah, 65 : 25. Accordingly we find, that in the primitive church converts were remarkably changed in this respect: "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared—not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Tit. 3 : 4, 5. "In which ye also walked; but now you also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth." Col. 3 : 7, 8.

IX. Gracious affections soften the heart, and are accompanied by a Christian *tenderness of spirit*.

False affections, however they may seem at first to improve the disposition, have, in the end, a tendency to harden the heart; and the consequence is, the persons thus deluded become less affected by their sins, and less circumspect in their conduct; less moved by the warnings and cautions of the word of God, and less susceptible of benefit from the chastisements of his providence, than they were while under legal awakenings and the fear of hell. They have felt certain impressions and affections, have a high opinion of themselves, and consider their state as being quite safe; and therefore they are now much more easy

than they were before in the neglect of such duties as are troublesome and inconvenient. They are not so alarmed at their own defects and transgressions, and are more liable to yield to temptation. They are now less attentive to their behavior in the holy presence of God, in the time of public or private worship. Formerly, perhaps, under legal convictions, they took much pains in religion, and denied themselves many gratifications; but now, thinking themselves out of the danger of hell, they are more disposed to avoid the cross, and save themselves the trouble of performing difficult duties.

Such persons as these, instead of embracing Christ as the Savior *from* their sins, trust him as the Savior *of* their sins; instead of fleeing to him as the *refuge* FROM their spiritual enemies, they make use of him as a *defence* OF those enemies. They make Christ the minister of sin, and trust in him to preserve them in the quiet enjoyment of their unholy gratifications. Thus they take the place of the children of God, even his bosom, and fight against him with weapons hid under their skirts. The Apostle Jude speaks of some who crept in among the saints, professing to trust in Christ, but who were in reality ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness. Jude, 4.

Gracious affections possess a quite different tendency; they gradually turn a heart of stone into a heart of flesh. They flow from a contrite spirit. The tenderness of heart essential to a true Christian, is well represented by our Savior, when he compares such a one to a little child. The affections of a child are easily moved. It is fearful and diffident, pliant and compassionate.

Hence gracious affections do not tend to make per-

sons forward and noisy, but rather the contrary. Real Christians are disposed to clothe with a kind of holy fear, all their behavior toward God and toward man. Psa. 2 : 11 ; 1 Pet. 3 : 15 ; 2 Cor. 7 : 15 ; Eph. 6 : 5 ; 1 Pet. 3 : 2 ; Rom. 11 : 20.

But some may ask, is there no such thing, then, as a holy boldness in prayer, and in the other duties of divine worship ? I answer, there undoubtedly is, and it is chiefly to be found in eminent saints, possessing a high degree of faith and love. But this holy confidence is not at all opposed to reverence. It removes or lessens that distance which arises from moral causes, or alienation of heart ; it also removes the distance of relation, so that slaves now become children ; but it does not at all lessen that reverential distance, which, in the nature of things, necessarily exists between the Creator and the creature. Confidence in the sinner, possessing a proper view of God and of himself, will not induce him to approach his Maker with less fear and reverence than the angels in heaven do, who cover their faces before his throne. Isa. 6 : 2. Elijah, that great prophet, who enjoyed so much holy familiarity with God, when conversing with him on the mount, wrapped his face in his mantle. It was not from servile dread, occasioned by the terrible wind, and earthquake, and fire, that he thus acted ; for these had ceased, and God then spoke to him as a friend, "in a still small voice." 1 Kings, 19 : 12, 13. And Moses, with whom God spake face to face, as a man speaks with his friend, and who was distinguished above all the other prophets by the familiarity to which he was admitted, at a time when he enjoyed the greatest nearness to God, "made haste," it is said, "and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped." Exod. 34 : 8.

There is a most improper and irreverent boldness in the addresses of some persons to the great JEHOVAH, from the very idea of which they would shrink with confusion and horror, were they sensible of the natural and moral distance subsisting between God and themselves. They are like the Pharisee, who drew near boldly, in confidence of his own eminence in holiness; whereas, if they were sensible of their vileness, they would act more like the Publican, who "stood afar off, and durst not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven; but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." It becomes such sinful creatures as we are, to approach a holy God, although with faith and without terror, yet with contrition, penitence, and confusion of face. It was foretold that this should be the disposition of the church, in her latter-day glory, when God should afford her remarkable comfort, by the revelation of his covenant mercy to her: "I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant. Then shalt thou remember thy ways, and be ashamed. And I will establish my covenant with thee, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord; that thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God." Ezek. 16 : 60, &c. The woman of whom we read in the seventh chapter of Luke, who, according to the testimony of the Redeemer himself, had much of that love which casteth out fear, approached Christ in an acceptable manner, when she came with modesty, reverence, and shame; and when she stood at his feet, weeping behind him, as not being fit to appear before him, washing his feet with her tears.

One reason why gracious affections are accompa-

nied by this tenderness of spirit, is this—true grace promotes convictions of conscience. Convictions are usually the first work of the Holy Spirit, and after conversion succeeds joy and peace in believing. This experience has a tendency to put an end to terror, though it rather increases than diminishes convictions. It does not stupify conscience, but renders it more sensible of the heinous and dreadful nature of sin. Grace tends to give the mind a clearer conception of the same things respecting sin, of which it was convinced under the first workings of the Holy Spirit; that is, its direct opposition to the will and honor of God, his utter detestation of it, and the dreadful punishment it deserves, and to which it leads the finally impenitent. And not only so, but it convinces the mind of the infinitely hateful nature of sin, a circumstance of which it saw nothing, while under legal convictions. The heart of a true penitent is like a burnt child, it dreads the fire; whereas, on the contrary, he who has had only a counterfeit experience, is like iron, which, having been heated, and then suddenly quenched, becomes much harder than before. False conversions put an end to convictions of conscience; and so either remove, or greatly diminish, that tenderness of spirit which was manifested under legal convictions.

All gracious affections promote this Christian tenderness or sensibility. It is promoted not only by godly sorrow, but by evangelical joy: "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling." Psalm 2: 11. Gracious hope has likewise the same tendency: "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy." Psalm 147: 11. Indeed, the more there is of this hope, the more there is also of this holy tenderness of soul. The more servile

fear is banished by evangelical confidence, the more is reverential fear promoted. In proportion as the fear of the displeasure of God in future punishment is decreased, in the same proportion will the fear of his displeasure itself be increased; and as the fear of hell is diminished, in the same degree will the fear of sin be augmented. The removal of doubts, as to the true Christian's state, is attended by a proportionate increase of holy jealousy, as to his own heart, his own strength, wisdom, &c. The less he is afraid of natural evil, the more he is likely to be afraid of moral evil, or the evil of sin. The more he has of holy boldness, the less he has of self-confidence. As he is delivered from the fear of hell, he is in the same degree made sensible of having deserved it. He has the firmest comfort, but the softest heart; is richer than others, but poorest of all in spirit; he is at once eminent, and the least and tenderest child, among the saints.

X. Gracious affections possess *a beautiful symmetry*.

Not that this symmetry is perfect in the present life; it is often defective in many things, through the imperfection of grace, for want of proper instruction, or through some particular unhappiness of natural temper. But still there is never that monstrous disproportion in the gracious affections, and the various parts of true religion in the saints, which is very often observable in the counterfeit graces and false religion of hypocrites.

The holy affections of the saints possess that proportion, which is the natural consequence of the universality of the work of sanctification. They have

the whole image of Christ upon them ; they have put off the old man, and have put on the new man, in all his parts and members. It hath pleased the Father, that in Christ all fulness should dwell ; there is in him every grace, and they who are his receive of his fulness, grace for grace. John 1 : 14, 16. There is every grace in them which is in Christ ; grace answering to grace ; the same beautiful proportion which is in the original—feature for feature—member for member. The natural body consists of many members, all in beautiful proportion ; so it is in the new man, consisting of various graces and affections. The body of one who was born a perfect child, may fail of exact proportion through distemper ; yet the disproportion is by no means like that of those who are born monsters.

It is with hypocrites as it was with Ephraim of old :

“Ephraim is a cake not turned,” half baked and half dough—there is no uniformity in their affections.

There is in many hypocrites a great disproportion as to the several kinds of religious affections. Holy hope and holy fear are united in the saints. See Psa. 33 : 18 ; 147 : 11. But hypocrites have the firmest confidence, while they are void of reverence, self-diffidence and caution. The joy of the saints, however great, is invariably attended by holy fear. The disciples, on the morning of the resurrection of Christ, “departed quickly from the sepulchre, with fear and GREAT joy.” Matt. 28 : 8. But hypocrites rejoice without trembling ; their joy is directly opposite to godly fear.

One great difference between the saints and hypocrites is this—the joy and comfort of the former is attended by godly sorrow and mourning for sin. They have not only sorrow to prepare them for their first comfort, but it continues with them after their joy is established.

Although Christ hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, so that true believers are freed from the sorrow of everlasting punishment, and may appropriate the consolation which he has provided; yet this does not prevent their joy from being attended by the sorrow of repentance. Real saints are represented in Scripture, not only as those who *have* mourned, but as those who *still* mourn for sin.

Not only is there often in hypocrites an essential deficiency, as to some kinds of religious affections; but also a strange disproportion, in the same affections, with regard to different objects.

Some make a great show of love to God, and perhaps have been much affected by what they have heard or thought respecting him; but they have not a spirit of love and benevolence toward men: they are disposed to envy, evil speaking, contention, and revenge; and are not very strict and conscientious in observing the commandment of doing to others as they would that others should do to them: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar." 1 John 4: 10. And, on the other hand, there are some who appear as if they had a great deal of benevolence to men, who have no love to God.

Again; there are some who have strong affections for particular persons, but their love is far from being so extensive and universal as true Christian love is. They are warm in their affections for some, while they are bitter in their enmity against others. They are closely attached to their own party, to those who admire and love them, but are fierce against those that oppose them. "Be ye like unto your Father" who "is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good. —For if ye love them that love you, what reward have

you? do not even the publicans the same?" Matt. 5: 45, 46. Some evidence great affection for their neighbors, and are enraptured with the company of the children of God abroad; while, at the same time, they are churlish toward their wives, their children, and domestics, and are very negligent of relative duties.

As there is a monstrous disproportion in the love of some professors in its exercise toward different persons, so there is in its exercise toward the same persons, at different times. Some persons evidence great love to men, as it respects their temporal welfare, but appear to have no concern for their spiritual and everlasting happiness. Others, on the contrary, pretend to have great love for the souls of men, while they have no concern for their temporal comfort. To profess great concern for the souls of men costs nothing; but, in order to promote their temporal ease and comfort, it is necessary to part with money. But true Christian love to the brethren extends both to their spiritual and temporal interests; and in this it resembles the love and compassion of Jesus Christ. He showed mercy to the souls of men by preaching the Gospel to them, and to their bodies by going about doing good, healing all manner of sickness and disease among the people. We have a remarkable instance of his compassion to the souls and the bodies of men, shown to the same individuals: "And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things." Mark, 6: 34, &c. In the sequel, we have an account of his compassion to their bodies. They had been a long time without food, and he fed five thousand of them with five loaves and two fishes.—Now, if the com-

passion of professing Christians does not operate in the same way, it is evidently not true Christian compassion.

Further, it is an evidence that our affections are not evangelical, if we appear to feel much for the imperfections of our fellow-professors, as for their lukewarmness, &c. but are in no proportion sensible of our own. A real Christian may be affected by the lukewarmness of other saints, and may mourn over it; but, at the same time, he will not feel so much for the imperfections of others, as for his own. The latter are most in view, and of those he is most ready to complain. A less degree of spiritual influence will lead a person to pity himself, than what would induce him rightly to feel the calamities of others; and if men have not the inferior degree of gracious influence, we may at once infer that they do not possess the greater.

And here I would observe,—and the observation may be regarded as a general criterion,—that if persons pretend to high attainments in religion, but do not appear to have arrived at certain lower attainments, it is an evidence that their profession is of no value. For example, if they profess to be greatly affected by the wickedness of their own hearts, but are not affected by the obvious violations of the commands of God in their practice; or if they profess to venture their souls upon Christ, trusting the faithfulness of God in his promises, for their eternal welfare; but at the same time have not confidence enough to trust him with a small part of their property, devoted to pious and charitable purposes; under these circumstances their professions are manifestly of no value.

What has been observed of the affection of love, may be also observed of all the other affections, in their re-

ference to religion. When they are genuine, they extend, in a proportionate degree, to all the various things which form their proper objects; but when they are spurious, they are in general strangely disproportionate. It is thus with religious desires: in the saints, they have respect to all those things in general which are spiritual and excellent, and that in proportion to their excellency or importance; but, in false professors, the case is often quite otherwise. The latter pursue, with impatient vehemence, something of small importance, while they treat with coldness and indifference other things of far greater consequence. Thus, for instance, some persons have a strong inclination to declare to others what they experience, and perhaps to exhort them; while, at the same time, they possess no proportionate inclination to other duties, to which true religion has even a more powerful tendency; such as pouring out the soul before God in earnest, secret prayer, and thanksgiving.

As to hatred and zeal, when they spring from right principles, they are exercised against all kinds of sin in proportion to the degree of their turpitude: "I hate every false way." Psalm 119: 104. But false hatred and zeal against sin, are exercised against some particular sins only. Thus some persons are very zealous against profaneness and pride in dress, who themselves are notorious for covetousness, and perhaps for backbiting, envy, turbulence of spirit, and hatred toward those who have injured them. False zeal is exercised against the sins of others only; but truly Christian zeal, chiefly against our own. Some profess to abhor their own sins of heart, and exclaim much against their inward corruption, and yet make light of sins in practice, and seem to commit them without much restraint or remorse.

As there is a much greater disproportion in the exercise of false religious affections than of the true, as to different objects, so there is also, as to different *times*. For although true Christians are not always alike, yet there is not the same instability in them as in false professors. The righteous man is said to be one, whose heart is fixed, trusting in God; to have his heart established with grace, and to hold on his way. Psalm 112 : 7; Heb. 13 : 9; Job, 17 : 9. If, therefore, persons are religious only by fits, it is evident that their religious affections are unsound. They are like certain waters, which in the time of a shower flow abundantly, but are afterward soon dry. A real saint, on the contrary, is like a stream flowing from a perpetual spring; though it may be greatly increased by a shower, and decreased by drought, it yet constantly runs. "The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life." John, 4 : 14. Many hypocrites are like comets, which appear for a while with a great blaze; they are very irregular and unsteady in their motion, and are therefore called wandering stars. Jude, 13. But real saints are like the fixed stars, which, though they rise and set, and are often obscured by clouds, are yet stedfast in their orbits, and may be truly said to shine with a constant light.

And as there is a great disproportion in false religious affections, as to different times; so there often is, as to different *situations*. Some are greatly affected in company, but quite otherwise in private meditation, and in secret converse with God. A true Christian undoubtedly delights in religious fellowship, and finds much to affect him in Christian conversation; but he also delights to retire for the purpose of holding com-

munion with God in private. See Genesis, 24 : 63. How often do we read that Jesus Christ retired into solitary places for holy converse with his Father ! It is difficult to conceal strong feelings, but gracious affections are of a less obtrusive nature than those that are counterfeit. The gracious mourning of true penitents, at the beginning of the latter-day glory, is represented as being so secret, as to be hidden from the companions of their bosoms : " And the land shall mourn, every family apart, the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart," &c. Zech. 12 : 12-14. The saints mourn in secret for the sins of others : " If ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eyes shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive." Jer. 13 : 17. Gracious joy is also of a retired nature : " My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips, when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches." Psalm 63 : 5.

The most eminent divine favors which the saints have enjoyed, according to what we read in Scripture, were enjoyed in their retirement. The principal manifestations which God made of himself, and of his covenant mercy to Abraham, were made when he was alone, apart from his numerous family. Isaac received that special gift of God to him, Rebecca, when walking alone, meditating in the field. Jacob was retired for prayer, when he wrestled with the Angel of the covenant, and obtained the blessing. God revealed himself to Moses in the bush, when he was in a solitary place in the desert, in Mount Horeb ; and afterward, when he was admitted to the closest communion with God which he ever enjoyed, he was alone in the same mountain, where he continued forty days and forty

nights. God held communion with those great prophets, Elijah and Elisha, and conversed with them freely, chiefly in their retirement. When Jesus Christ had the greatest prelibations of his future glory, it was not when he was with the multitude, or with the twelve apostles, but when retired in a solitary place, with only Peter, James, and John. And when John, the beloved disciple, was favored with those wonderful visions of Christ, and of his future dispensations toward the church and the world, which are recorded in the Revelation, he was alone, in the Isle of Patmos. I do not deny that there are also instances of great favors received by the saints when in company with others; or that there is not much in Christian conversation, and in social and public worship, tending greatly to refresh and elevate the minds of the saints. All I aim at by what I have said, is, to show that true grace, however much it loves Christian society, in a peculiar manner delights in retirement and secret communion with God. If persons are much engaged in social religion, and but little in the religion of the closet, and are little moved when alone with God, there is reason to doubt the reality of their religion.

XI. The higher gracious affections are raised, the more is a *spiritual appetite* increased.

The more a person loves God with a gracious affection, the more he desires to love him: and the more he hates sin, the more he desires to hate it. The kindling of gracious affections is like the kindling of a flame: the higher it is raised, the more ardent it is. It is as na-

tural for one who is born spiritually to thirst after growth in holiness, as it is for a child to desire its mother's breast. 1 Pet. 2 : 2, 3. The highest enjoyment of the saints in this world is but a taste, a prelibation of their future glory ; and the greatest eminence at which they arrive in the present state, has no tendency to satisfy them, or to abate their desires after more. On the contrary, the advances which they have already made, induce them to press forward with greater eagerness : " Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark. Let us therefore, as many as are PERFECT, be thus minded." Phil. 3 : 13-15.

The more we possess of holy affections, the more we have of that spiritual taste of which I have spoken elsewhere, by which we perceive the beauty and relish the sweetness of moral excellence, or holiness. The more grace we possess, while in this state of imperfection, the more are we sensible of our distance from what we ought to be ; and of course the more we feel our need of grace. Besides, grace, so long as it is imperfect, is of a growing nature, and in a growing state. All animated beings, while in a state of imperfection, seek after growth ; and so much the more, as they are healthy and thriving. The more we possess of spiritual discoveries and affections, the more do we become earnest supplicants for grace, or spiritual food, that we may grow thereby ; and the more earnestly do we seek it, in the use of appointed means ; for gracious longings after holiness are not feeble, ineffectual desires.

But it may be said, Is this consistent with what all allow to be the case, that spiritual enjoyments are of a soul-satisfying nature ? I answer, there will appear no inconsistency in this, if it is considered in what re-

spects spiritual enjoyments are said to be soul-satisfying. Certainly they are not of a cloying nature. They satisfy the soul,

(1.) As they are adapted to its nature, its capacity, and its wants; so that, possessing them, we desire no other kind of enjoyment.

(2.) They always answer our expectations.

(3.) The gratification and pleasure arising from spiritual enjoyments are permanent.

(4.) There is such a fulness and sufficiency in spiritual blessings, that, were obstacles arising from our depravity removed, they would satisfy to the utmost extent of our wishes.

But we are not to conclude from these things, that a person who has tasted of spiritual blessings, has no appetite excited after more, or that his appetite will not increase the more he tastes, until he arrives at a state of perfect enjoyment. Bodies attracted to the earth, tend to it the more strongly the nearer they approach. Spiritual good is of a satisfying nature, and, for that very reason, the person who tastes it, will thirst after it; and the more he experiences, the more he knows of its satisfying sweetness, the more earnestly will he hunger and thirst for those blessings, until he arrives at absolute perfection. Hence it is, that the greater are our spiritual affections, the more ardent are our desires and endeavors after grace and holiness.

But with false religious affections it is quite otherwise. If at first there is an ardent desire after more grace, in proportion as these affections rise, that desire ceases, or is abated. Perhaps the mere professor, while under legal convictions and much afraid of hell, earnestly desires spiritual light in his understanding, faith in Christ, and love to God; but now that those false

affections are produced, he no longer feels anxious for light and grace, for his end is answered; he is confident that his sins are forgiven, that he is in the path to heaven, and so he is satisfied. Very high false religious affections put an end especially to ardent desires after grace and holiness. The subject of these affections is far from appearing to himself as a poor, empty creature; on the contrary, in his own estimation he is rich, and increased with goods, and hardly conceives of any thing more excellent than what he has already obtained.

Hence there is an end to the earnestness of many persons, when they have obtained what they call their conversion; or, at least, when they have enjoyed those high affections which make them fully confident that they are converted. While they regard themselves as in a state of nature, they seek after God, and cry earnestly for grace, in the use of means; but afterward they act as if their work was done, they live upon their past experience, and there is an end of their striving for divine things. On the other hand, the holy principles which actuate the real saint, have a far more powerful influence in producing earnestness after God and holiness, than that servile fear which stimulates the exertions where nothing more is experienced than mere legal convictions. Hence seeking God is mentioned as one of the distinguishing characteristics of the real saints. *Psa. 24 : 6; 69 : 6, 32; 70 : 4.* The Scriptures every where represent our seeking, striving, and labor, as being chiefly subsequent to our regeneration, and our regeneration as forming only the commencement of our work. And almost all that is said in the New Testament respecting watching,—giving earnest heed to ourselves,—running the race that is set before

us,—striving and agonizing,—wrestling not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers,—fighting,—putting on the whole armor of God,—pressing forward,—reaching forth,—continuing instant in prayer,—crying to God day and night,—is addressed immediately to *saints*. But there are many professors at present, who have adopted a strange anti-scriptural notion about having all their striving and wrestling before they are converted; so as to have an easy time of it afterward, enjoying themselves in sloth and indolence. Without doubt there are some hypocrites who will think themselves well able to abide this test, and who will readily say that they desire not to rest satisfied with present attainments, that they are pressing forward, longing after God, and desiring greater degrees of holiness. But the truth is, their desires are not properly after holiness for its own sake, but only for selfish ends. They long after clearer discoveries, that they may be better satisfied as to the state of their souls; or because, in great discoveries self is gratified, in being so highly favored of God, and so exalted above other persons. Or perhaps they have a kind of forced longing: they must, they think, long for more grace, otherwise their state would be doubtful. But such things as these are far different from the thirsting of the new man after God and holiness. There is an ardent desire after holiness, as natural to the new creature as vital heat is to the body. There is a holy panting after the Spirit of God, for an increase of holiness, as natural to the new creature as breathing is to the animated body. Holiness or sanctification is more directly the object of these desires, than any manifestation of the love of God. Where we read in the Scripture of the desires, longings, and thirstings of the saints,

righteousness and the law of God are much more frequently mentioned as their object, than any thing else. The saints desire the sincere milk of the word, not so much to testify the love of God toward them, as that they may grow thereby in holiness. Grace is the good man's treasure. Isa. 33 : 6. Godliness is the gain of which he is covetous. 1 Tim. 6 : 6.—Hypocrites long for discoveries, more for the present comfort of them, and from the notion that they are a manifestation of the love of God, than for their sanctifying influence. But neither longings after great discoveries, or after the love of God; nor desiring to be in heaven, or to die; is so distinguishing a mark of true piety, as earnest desires after holiness of heart and life.

XII. Gracious affections have their exercise and fruit in *Christian practice*.

Christian practice implies three things:

1. A behavior or conduct universally agreeing with the will of God.
2. A holy conduct pursued with the greatest earnestness and diligence; so as to make the practice of religion eminently our work and business.
3. A perseverance in holiness to the end of life; so as to make religion not only our business at certain seasons, or upon extraordinary occasions; but the business of life; a business adhered to through all changes, and under all trials.

The necessity of each of these in order to true religion, is most clearly and fully taught in the word of God.

1. It is necessary that we should be *universally* obedient: "Every man that hath this hope in him, puri-

fieth himself, even as he is pure." 1 John, 3 : 3. "Whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not ; whosoever sinneth, hath not seen him, neither known him." Verse 6. "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." John, 15 : 14. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all." James, 2 : 10. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these : Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like ; of which I tell you, as I have told you in time past, that they" who "do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Gal. 5 : 19, 20, 21. One sin retained and indulged will cut us off from everlasting salvation. Matt. 5 : 29, 30. Saul was commanded to slay all the Amalekites ; he slew all but Agag, and the saving of him alive proved his ruin. Caleb and Joshua entered into the promised rest, because they followed the Lord fully. Num. 14 : 24 ; 32 : 11, 12 ; Deut. 1 : 35, 36 ; Josh. 14 : 6-14. Naaman appeared to be greatly affected with gratitude for the healing of his leprosy, and he proposed to engage in the service of God ; yet in one thing he desired to be excused, and by this he gave evidence, as I suppose, of his hypocrisy. And Herod, though he feared John, and heard him gladly, and, in consequence, did many things ; yet he refused to part with his beloved Herodias, and for this refusal, no doubt, he was condemned. It is necessary that we should part with our dearest iniquities, those which are as our right hand and right eye ; sins which most easily beset us, and to which we are most exposed from our natural inclinations, or particular circumstances. Christ will not reveal his love to us until we part with our dearest

sins, nor until we are brought to comply with the most difficult duties.

Our obedience must not consist in the mere negatives, it must also include the positives of religion. Sins of omission are breaches of the commands of God, as much as sins of commission. Christ, in Matthew 25, represents those who shall be placed at the left hand, as being condemned for sins of omission: "I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat," &c. A man therefore cannot be said to be universally obedient merely because he is no thief, nor drunkard, nor whoremonger, nor profane swearer, nor liar; because he is not dishonest, unclean, or malicious; he must also be pious, humble, meek, forgiving, peaceful, benevolent, merciful, and charitable. Without these things, he does not obey the laws of Christ—laws abundantly insisted on in the Scriptures, as being of the greatest importance, and never to be dispensed with

2. In order to our being true Christians, it is necessary that we pursue the service of God with great earnestness and diligence, as *the main business* of our lives. All the people of God not only serve him, but are *zealous* of good works. Titus, 2 : 14. No man can do the service of two masters at once. Those who are the true servants of God, give themselves up to his service, and make it their constant work; that which employs their best affections, and the chief of their strength. Phil. 3 : 13. Without earnestness, there is no proceeding in that narrow way which leads to life; and so no arriving at that state of happiness and glory to which it leads. Without earnest labor, there is no ascending the *hill* of Zion; and so no arriving at the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem. There is need of watching and praying always, in order to our escaping

those dreadful evils which are coming on the ungodly, and our being counted worthy to stand before the Son of man. There is need of our putting on the whole armor of God, and our exercising the utmost firmness, in order to our avoiding a total overthrow, and being utterly destroyed by the fiery darts of the wicked one. It is necessary that we should forget the things that are behind, and reach forth to the things that are before, pressing toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, in order to our obtaining that prize. Slothfulness in the service of God is as destructive as open rebellion; for the slothful servant is a wicked servant, and shall be cast into outer darkness, among the more determined enemies of God. Matt. 25 : 26, 30. They who are slothful, are not followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises. Heb. 6 : 11, 12. All who follow that cloud of witnesses who are gone before to heaven, lay aside every weight, and the sin that most easily besets them, and run with patience the race set before them. Heb. 12 : 1. That faith by which we rely upon the righteousness of Christ, and truly live upon him, is invariably accompanied by such a spirit of earnestness in the Christian work.

3. The true Christian *perseveres*, in the way of universal obedience through all the various trials by which he is exercised, *to the end of life*. He continues in the practice of duty; steadfast in a holy conduct through the various trials to which he is exposed.

By trials, I mean those things which render our continuance in the path of duty, and in faithfulness to God, difficult. Some things tend to cherish or provoke our depraved inclinations; some lessen restraints, and embolden us to commit sin; and some make our duty ap

pear terrible, and so tend to frighten us, and drive us from it. God, in his providence, tries his friends, in order that he may make them manifest, that he may exhibit to their own consciences, and to the world, sufficient matter of conviction as to their real state.

True saints may in some degree backslide, they may be foiled by particular temptations, and may fall even into great sins; but they never fall so as to grow weary of religion and the service of God, and habitually and finally to dislike and neglect it, either on its own account, or on account of the difficulties which attend it. This is evident from Gal. 6 : 9; Rom. 2 : 7; Heb. 10 : 36. Those who are truly converted, are new men—new creatures—they are sanctified throughout, in spirit, soul and body: old things are passed away—all things are become new,—they have new dispositions—a new conversation, and a new practice—they walk in newness of life, and continue to do so to the end of life. Those who fall away, and cease thus to walk, give evidence that they were never risen with Christ. This is especially the case, when the persuasion that they are converted, and so in a safe state, is the very cause of their declension. It is the same, whether they fall into their former sins, or have the corruption of nature, instead of being mortified, turned into a new channel. Some persons who think themselves converted, do not indeed return to their former profaneness and lewdness; but, from a high opinion of their experience, graces, and privileges, gradually settle in a self-righteous temper of mind, and adopt a correspondent behavior. When it is thus with professors, however far they may appear to have departed from their former evil practices, this alone is sufficient to condemn them, and may render their latter state far worse than their former.

Thus I have explained what I mean, when I say, that gracious affections have their exercise and fruit in Christian practice. That their tendency is to such a result, will appear from a consideration of each of the characteristics of holy affection which have been above laid down.

This subject may be farther illustrated and confirmed, by our considering that the holy Scriptures place sincerity and soundness of religion in our making choice of God as our Lord and portion, forsaking all for him; in our complying with the religion of Christ, embracing it with all its difficulties, disregarding even our lives for his sake; and in our giving up ourselves, with all that we possess, wholly and for ever to his service. Now if we give up ourselves, with our affections, to his service, without reserve, we shall behave ourselves universally as those who are devoted to his glory; and if we cordially and deliberately embrace the religion of Jesus, with all its difficulties, and with all the sacrifices it requires, we shall embrace it universally and practically, with decision and perseverance.

The tendency of grace in the heart, to a holy practice, is direct, and the connection natural, intimate, and necessary. There is nothing of a more active nature than true grace; it is spiritual and divine life itself. Godliness in the heart, is as directly related to practice, as a fountain is to a stream. To promote holy practice is a principal object of regeneration; and every thing in this great change is calculated to secure this important end: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Eph. 2: 10. "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Tit. 2: 14. See also 2 Cor.

5 : 15 ; Heb. 9 : 14 ; Col. 1 : 21, 22 ; 1 Pet. 1 : 18 ; Luke, 1 : 74, 75. Holy practice is as much the object of God in all that he does respecting his saints, as fruit is the object of all the husbandman does in the cultivation of his field or vineyard. Every thing belonging to Christian experience, directly and immediately leads to a holy practice.

As the real saint is always attentive to a holy practice, so *he only* is thus attentive. All unsanctified men are workers of iniquity ; they are of their father the devil, and his works they will do. Mere pretenders to religion will not endure the trials to which, in general, professors are exposed ; they will not continue faithful to Christ in practice, and follow him whithersoever he goes. However far they may proceed in religion, they are still the servants of sin ; the chains of their old taskmasters are not broken ; their lusts have still a reigning power in their hearts, and therefore to these masters they will continue to render obedience : “ Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried ; but the wicked ” will “ do wickedly. ” Dan. 12 : 10. An unsanctified man may hide his sin, and in many things, and for a time, deny himself ; but he will not finally renounce his sin ; it is too dear to him : “ Wickedness ” is “ sweet in his mouth ; he ” spareth “ it, and forsaketh it not. ” Job, 20 : 12, 13. Herein principally consists the straitness of the gate, and the narrowness of the way that leads to life—the way of life is a way of self-denial and self-renunciation.

From what has been said, it is manifest that Christian practice, or a holy life, is a great and distinguishing evidence of saving grace. But I may go further, and assert, that it is the CHIEF EVIDENCE OF GRACE, both as it respects ourselves and others.

1. I will consider Christian practice, or a holy life, as it is a manifestation of the sincerity of a professor, to his *neighbors and his Christian brethren*.

That this is the chief sign of grace in this respect, is very evident from the word of God. Christ has repeatedly declared that we should know professors *by their fruits*. Matt. 7 : 16. And then, after showing why the moral conduct of professors must necessarily form the chief and most decisive evidence as to their real character, he repeats the assertion : “ Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.” Ver. 20. “ Every tree is known by” its “ fruit.” Luke, 6 : 44. It is no where said, Ye shall know the tree by its leaves or its flowers ; or ye shall know men by their talk, or by what they say about their experience, &c. but, “ By their fruits ye shall know them ; the tree is known by its fruit.”

And as this is the chief criterion to which Christ has directed us, in order to our forming a right judgment of others ; so it is the chief evidence which we are to present to others, in order that they may form a right judgment of us : “ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father” who “ is in heaven.” Matt. 5 : 16. Christ does not say that others, hearing your good words, but that others seeing your *good works*, may glorify your Father who is in heaven. The apostles mention Christian practice as the principal ground upon which they formed a judgment of professing Christians. In the beginning of the sixth chapter to the Hebrews, Paul speaks of those who have had great illuminations, who afterward fall away ; and then, in the ninth verse, he adds, “ But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation ;” and then in the next verse, he assigns the reason of his

good opinion of them. He does not say that he judged favorably of them, from the account they had given of the work of God upon their souls, or from their talking very experimentally; but from their *work and labor of love*: “For God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.” The same apostle speaks of serving God in practice, as the only satisfactory proof of supreme love to Christ, and a disposition to prefer his honor to our own interest: “For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s; but ye know the proof of him, [Timotheus,] that as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the Gospel.” Phil. 2 : 21, 22. A manifestation of our faith without works, is a mere profession of faith; and, as the Apostle James says, “What doth it profit, though a man *say* he hath faith?” James, 2 : 14. There are two ways of manifesting to others what is in our hearts; one by what we say, and the other by what we do. Certainly our saying that we have faith—that we are converted; our relating the manner of our conversion, and the experience that accompanied and followed, is only showing our faith by our words, which the apostle speaks of as falling far short of manifesting, or showing our faith by our works.

As the Scriptures very clearly assert, that practice is the best evidence of sincerity in a profession of religion, so reason teaches the same thing. The common sense of mankind universally directs them to judge, in other concerns, of men’s dispositions, chiefly from their practice; as, for instance, whether a man is a loyal subject, a real friend, or a faithful servant. If a man professes a great deal of friendship for another.

we conclude at once, from rational principles, that such profession is by no means so decisive as a series of actions; a faithful adherence in the hour of adversity, and a readiness to sacrifice his own interest, in order to promote that of his friend. A prudent man will trust to such proofs of friendship, sooner than a thousand earnest professions, solemn declarations, and affectionate expressions. And it is equally consistent with right reason to regard practice as the best evidence of friendship toward Christ: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them," says the Lord Jesus Christ, "he it is that loveth me." John, 14 : 21. Thus, if a man appears to imitate Christ, and greatly to exert himself to promote his kingdom and interest in the world, we are taught by rational principles, that this is an evidence of love, more to be depended upon than if he only talked of his love to Christ, and related, what he might call, his experience of the love of Christ. One man, in declaring his experience, tells how he has found his heart weaned from the world; but he is anxious in pursuing the world, and exceedingly unwilling to part, for charitable and pious uses, with much of what he obtains. Another professing Christian says but little; yet he is ready, at any time, to sacrifice his own interest, or gratification, when it stands in the way of his duty; and is always willing to part with his property to promote religion and the good of his fellow-creatures. Now reason teaches, that the latter gives a far more credible evidence of a heart weaned from the world than the former. If a man appears to walk humbly with God, and maintains a conversation indicating a broken heart—if he is patient under affliction, and meek in his behavior; he presents better evidence of humility, than if he told how deep a sense he

has had of his unworthiness, and how he has been brought to lie in the dust, emptied of self, &c. If a professor is assuming, and impatient of the least opposition, we may be confident that he is not what he professes to be. Again, if a professor of religion manifests in his behavior a tenderness of spirit toward those who are in calamity, and is willing to communicate his property to promote the welfare of others, both as to their bodies and their souls, is not this a much clearer manifestation of a spirit of love to men, than his only telling what love he felt to them at certain times, how he pitied their souls, and was in travail for them? Transient affections easily produce words; and words are cheap. Hypocrites may be much more easily brought to talk, than to act like saints.

Hence it is evident, that our moral and religious conduct is the most satisfactory manifestation which we can possibly make of our piety, as it respects our neighbors and Christian brethren.

But then the following things should be well observed, in order that this subject may be rightly understood.

(1.) It should be remembered, that when the Scriptures speak of Christian practice, as the best evidence, with regard to others, of our being in a state of grace, *a profession of religion* is always supposed. The criterion, mentioned above, was given to the followers of Christ exclusively, to guide them in their opinions of professing Christians, and of those who offered to become members of their societies; and not for the trial of heathens, or of those who made no profession of Christianity, and with whom therefore they had nothing to do. This is evident from the passage already quoted from the seventh of Matthew, "By their fruits

ye shall know them." Jesus Christ applies this rule to those who made a very high profession, that is, the false prophets, who came in sheep's clothing, verse 15. In the following passage of the epistle of James, it is evident that both the person speaking, and the person spoken to, are professors of faith in Christ: "Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works."

But what, it may be asked, is comprehended in a profession of religion? I answer, first, it is implied that it be made with an enlightened understanding. Professors of religion must be so far instructed in the principles of Christianity, as to understand the proper import of what is expressed in their profession. But in order to a credible profession of religion, it is not necessary that a particular account should be given of the method by which the Holy Spirit effected the work of conversion. There are no traces in Scripture of any such relation being required by the apostles or primitive Christians, in order to their receiving and treating others as their brethren; or of their first examining candidates respecting the particular order of their experience. They required of them a profession as to what was wrought; but no account of the manner in which it was effected. There is not, in the Scriptures, even the shadow of any such custom.

I am far from denying the expediency of professors giving an account of their experience to their brethren; nor do I suppose that giving an account of our experience, as to particular exercises of grace, affords no assistance to others in forming a judgment of our state; I admit also, that our being able to give a distinct account of the manner of our conversion, is a circumstance which adds clearness to the evidence of a work

of grace. But what I mention as unscriptural, is the requiring a particular and exact account of the method and steps by which the Spirit of God proceeded in bringing our souls into a state of salvation, as absolutely indispensable in order to our being esteemed real Christians ; and the neglect or rejection of other signs of a state of grace, which are far more important and decisive.

A profession of religion, is also a profession of all that is necessary in order to our being christians. If we take one part of religion and leave out another that is essential to it, what we take is not religion, because something which is of the essence of it is wanting. Thus, in order to a profession of religion, we must profess that we believe in Jesus Christ as the only Savior, because such belief is essential to Christianity. We must also profess to believe that Jesus Christ made an atonement for sin. In short, we must profess faith in all the essential doctrines of the Gospel, because a belief of these is absolutely necessary in order to real piety. But there are other things as essential to religion as an orthodox creed, of which it is therefore as necessary that we should make profession, before we can with propriety be said to profess religion. Thus it is essential to personal religion, that we repent of our sins, that we forsake them, and that we cordially embrace Christ as our Savior, giving up ourselves to be his servants entirely and for ever. Such things as these belong as much to the essence of religion, as the belief of any of the doctrines of the Gospel, and therefore the profession of them, either expressed or implied, as much belongs to a Christian profession. In ascertaining the different parts of a Christian profession, we must be guided by the word of God.

One particular to which a Christian profession must have respect, is *repentance*, implying a conviction that God would be just in our condemnation. See Matt. 3:6; Mark, 1:4; Matt. 3:7-12; Acts, 2:38; Neh. 9:2, 33, 35.

Again, I notice a profession of decided *reliance upon the work of Christ* for salvation. See Isa. 45:22, &c; Deut. 26:17; 1 Cor. 1:30, 31.

And lastly, I mention a profession of *universal obedience* to the will of God. See Exod. 19:8; & 24:3, 7; Deut. 26:16-18; 2 Kings, 23:3; Neh. 10:28, 29; Psa. 119:57, 106; 2 Chron. 15:12-14.

Hence, in order to our being justly esteemed sincere professors of religion, according to the rules of Christ and his apostles, we must exhibit a holy life, together with a profession, either expressing, or at least implying, such particulars as those which have now been enumerated.

(2.) That we may rightly understand how Christian practice is the best evidence of the sincerity of a professing Christian, it is necessary that what has been said respecting the *nature of Christian practice* should be borne in mind, and that it should be considered how far this may be visible to others. Merely that a professor of religion is a moral man, is no decisive proof of the sincerity of his profession. To proceed no further than this, is not making our light shine before men. This is not that work and labor of love manifested toward the name of Christ, which gave the apostle such a conviction of the sincerity of the professing Hebrews. Heb. 6:9, 10. There may appear nothing in a man's life and conversation inconsistent with his being truly pious, and yet there may be no clear, positive evidence that he is so. But there may be very de-

cisive, positive evidence of holiness in the general conduct of professors. They may give evidence of the universal performance of their duty, both to God and to man; of their walking as Christians in the house of God, in their families, and among their neighbors; of a disposition to deny themselves, and a willingness to suffer for Christ, for the interests of religion, and for the benefit of their brethren; and when this is the case there is an evidence of their sincerity, far more decisive and important than would be afforded by all other marks of gracious affections united.

(3.) It must be remembered, agreeably to what has been already observed, that no appearances whatever are *infallible proofs* of grace. The signs which have been mentioned are the best that can be given; and are such as oblige us to receive the professors as saints, and to rejoice in them, and love them as the children of God: but nothing that appears to us in their spirit and conduct, can be sufficient to produce an absolute certainty in our minds, as to the state of their souls; for we see not their hearts, nor all their behavior; much of it is in secret. It is impossible to determine with certainty, how far a person, from wrong principles, may proceed in the imitation of Christian graces. Though undoubtedly, if we were acquainted with as much of men's practices as their own consciences are, we might judge with infallible certainty as to their state.—This will further appear from what follows.

Having thus considered Christian practice as the best evidence of our sincerity, as it respects others, I now proceed,

2. To observe, that the Scriptures also speak of Christian practice as a satisfactory evidence of grace to *our own consciences*: "Hereby we know that we know him,

if we keep his commandments." 1 John, 2 : 3. "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in *deed*, and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." 1 John, 3 : 18, 19. And the Apostle Paul, in the sixth of Hebrews, speaks of the work and labor of love of those to whom he wrote, as that which produced in them a persuasion that they possessed something superior to the highest common illuminations; and which tended to afford them the most satisfactory hope concerning themselves: "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things which accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to forget your labor of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end." verse 9, &c. The apostle directs the Galatians to examine their practice, that they might rejoice in the safety and happiness of their state: "Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself, and not in another." Gal. 6 : 4. The Psalmist says, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments," Psa. 119 : 6. Our Savior, speaking to his immediate followers, says, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth the will* of my Father.—Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, &c.—And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, *ye that work iniquity*. Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and *doeth* them, I will liken him unto a wise man who built his house upon a rock. And every one that heareth

these sayings of mine, and *doeth them not*, shall be likened unto a foolish man" who "built his house upon the sand." Matt. 7 : 21-26.

But for the sake of greater clearness, I would show WHAT WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND by Christian practice, when the Scriptures represent it as a sure evidence to ourselves that we are real Christians ; and then attempt TO PROVE THAT THIS IS THE BEST EVIDENCE which any man can have of his being a Christian indeed.

(1.) I would *explain the nature of that practice*, which the Scriptures represent as a sure evidence to ourselves that we are real Christians.

When the Scriptures speak of good works, we cannot reasonably suppose that they have respect merely to what is *external*, and not at all to the *aim or intention* of the agent. Exertions of the body, thus regarded, are neither acts of obedience nor disobedience, any more than the motions of the body in a convulsion. But that obedience which constitutes the best evidence of grace, as it respects ourselves, is the obedience of the soul.

There are two kinds of exercises of grace. There are those which begin and terminate within the soul, possessing no immediate relation to any thing that is practical. Such are the exercises of grace which are confined to contemplation.

There is another kind of gracious exercise which is practical, because it immediately respects something to be done. It is the influence of grace, in the volitions of the will, directing our actions. As, for instance, when a believer, from a spirit of Christian charity, communicates to the necessities of the poor, or willingly, from supreme love to Christ, endures persecution, in the path of duty ; in both these cases there are the opera-

tions of grace, producing their correspondent actions. The acts of the soul, under the influence of grace, in the performance of good works, are the good works themselves. As Dr. Doddridge observes, the determinations of the will are, indeed, our very actions. In this exercise of the soul, is included the aim and intention of the mind. We should not regard the motions of a statue distributing alms by clock-work, as being acts of obedience to Christ; neither should we call the voluntary actions of any man, however agreeable in appearance to the will of God, by the name of obedience to Christ, if he had never heard of him, or had no reference to his commands in what he did. If true Christian obedience does not consist in the mere motions of the body only, but in the operations of the soul also, the whole exercise of the mind must be considered, including the motives by which it is actuated, and the respect it has to the will of God; otherwise it cannot be ascertained that our actions are obedience to the will of God. As he regards the soul more than the body, it is the principle by which our minds are influenced, that he chiefly regards in all our actions.

Now this is what we are to understand by obedience, when mentioned in Scripture, as a sure evidence to ourselves that we possess a principle of grace: it is *the obedience of the soul, prompting and governing our moral actions*. When practice is mentioned as a decisive evidence of our piety as it respects ourselves, that in our practice with which *we only* are acquainted is always included. When Christ, at the conclusion of his sermon upon the mount, speaks of our doing, or practising those sayings of his, as the grand evidence of our being true disciples, he has respect not only to our actions, but also to the exercise of mind by which

those actions are prompted. This will be evident, if we consider what those sayings are to which he refers: we shall find them as follows: "Blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are they that mourn; blessed are the meek; blessed are the merciful; blessed are the pure in heart;" &c. &c. We are often commanded to love one another; but this commandment respects chiefly an exercise of mind, terminating in practice. When we are told in Scripture, that men shall, at the last day, be judged "according to their works," and that "all shall receive according to the things done in the body," we are not to understand this of actions only; for God is often spoken of as searching the heart and trying the reins, that he may render to every one according to his works. See Rev. 2: 23; Jer. 17: 9, 10.

Though in this evidence of sincerity, what is inward is of greatest importance, yet what is outward is also included; and hereby are cut off all pretensions which any man, who externally lives wickedly, can possibly have as to signs of godliness.

(2.) I proceed to show, that Christian practice, thus explained, is *the chief evidence* to ourselves that we are really Christians. It is an evidence very much superior to any evidence drawn from our first convictions, our knowledge, or our comfort, or any exercises of grace whatever, which begin and end in the mind. This appears from the following arguments.

Argument I. Reason clearly shows, that those things which men, when left to follow their own choice, *show by their actions* that they prefer, are what they *do really prefer in their hearts*. Sincerity in religion, agreeably to what has been observed, consists in placing our affections supremely upon God, in having a disposition to resign all for Christ, &c. But our ac-

tions are the proper evidence as to what we really prefer. As, for instance, when God and other things are placed in competition : religion and its connected blessings on the one hand, and worldly interest or pleasure on the other ; a man's behavior under such circumstances, in actually forsaking the one and adhering to the other, is the proper test as to which he really prefers. Sincerity consists in forsaking all for Christ in heart ; but to forsake all for Christ in heart, is the same thing as to have a heart to forsake all for Christ ; and certainly the proper trial, whether a man has such a disposition, is his being actually put to it—his having Christ and other things so placed in competition, that he must necessarily forsake the one and adhere to the other.

It is therefore extremely absurd for any one to say that he has a good heart, while he lives a wicked life, or does not bring forth the fruit of universal holiness in his practice. For it is proved, in fact, that such men do not love God supremely. Men who live in the indulgence of sin, and yet flatter themselves that they shall go to heaven, act as though they hoped to make a fool of their Judge. This is implied in what the apostle says in the following passage : “ Be not deceived, God is not mocked ; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” Gal. 6 : 7.

Argument II. It is also evident, that those circumstances which *put it to the test*, whether men will prefer the approbation of God to other things *in practice*, are the proper trials of their sincerity. Those circumstances which constitute the difficulties of religion, or those things which render the performance of our duty difficult, upon any other principle than the love of God, are properly denominated trials. They are so, because

by them the reality of a supreme love to God is brought to the test of experiment and fact. The Scriptures, when they call the difficulties by which Christians are exercised, temptations or trials, explain themselves to mean thereby, the trials of our faith. See James, 1 : 2, 3 ; 1 Pet. 1 : 6, 7. The Apostle Paul speaks of the duty of parting with our property for the poor, as the proof of the sincerity of our love. 2 Cor. 8 : 8. The difficulties of religion are often represented in Scripture, as trying professors in the same way as the furnace tries gold and silver. Psalm 66 : 10, 11 ; Zech. 13 : 9. That which has the appearance of gold, is put into the furnace in order that it may be ascertained whether it is what it seems to be, or not. So the difficulties of religion try those who have the profession and the appearance of saints. If we put gold into the furnace, we ascertain its great value and preciousness ; and so, when under trials, true Christian virtues appear in all their inestimable importance. 1 Pet. 1, 7. Pure gold will come out of the furnace in full weight ; so true saints will lose nothing in the furnace of affliction ; they will come forth as gold. Job, 23 : 10. When God is said to try men, we are not to understand that he tries them for his own information, or that he may obtain evidence of their sincerity ; but chiefly for *their* satisfaction, and to exhibit evidence to *their own* consciences. Thus when God is said to prove Israel by difficulties in the wilderness and by their enemies in Canaan, to know what was in their hearts, whether they would keep his commandments or not, it must be understood that these trials were to manifest their sincerity to themselves, that they might know what was in their own hearts. So when God tempted, or tried Abraham with that painful command of offering up his

son, it was not for his own satisfaction, but for the satisfaction of Abraham, that he might have a clear manifestation of the favor of God toward him. When Abraham had proved faithful under this trial, God says to him, "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." This declaration implies, that in the practical exercise of grace, the existence of that grace was rendered more evident. We find also that Christ repeatedly adopted the same means of convincing those who pretended friendship to him, and of showing them what they were. This was the method he took with the rich young man. Matt. 19 : 16, &c. This man appeared to show much respect for Christ; he came kneeling to him, calling him Good Master, and making a great profession of obedience to the commands of God; but Christ put his sincerity to the test, by bidding him sell all that he had, give it to the poor, take up his cross and follow him. So he tried another, of whom we read in Matt. 8 : 20. This person professed great respect for Christ, saying, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." Christ immediately puts his friendship to the test, by telling him that "the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." And thus Christ is accustomed still to try professors in general. The seed sown in different kinds of ground, appears all alike when it first springs up; yet when it is tried by the heat of the sun, the difference becomes evident.

Since therefore these are the things by which God is pleased to try us, it is undoubtedly the safest way for us to try ourselves by the same means. As these trials are not for his information, but for ours, we ought

to receive our information from them, respecting the sincerity of our attachment to Christ. If we wish to know whether a building is strong or not, we should view it when the wind blows. When a man comes to the place where the path divides, one branch leading to Christ, the other to the gratification of his lusts, then he is brought to the test, then his real disposition, or the state of his mind, is likely to be ascertained.

Argument. III. Another argument by which it is proved that holy practice, as it has been already described, is the best evidence to ourselves of our being in a state of grace, is, that by practice grace is said in Scripture *to be made perfect, or to be finished*: "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect," or finished, as the original properly means. James, 2 : 22. Our love to God is said to be made perfect, or finished, in our keeping his commandments: "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoso keepeth his word, in him verily the love of God is perfected." 1 John, 2 : 4, 5. The commandment of Christ, to which the apostle here alludes, as appears from the following verses, is that great command of his, which respects deeds of love to our brethren. Again, we have a similar passage in chap. 4, ver. 12. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us."

Now if grace is thus made perfect in its fruit, if these practical exercises of grace are those in which it appears in its proper effects, in which whatsoever belongs to its design, tendency, and operation, is completed, then these exercises must be the best evidences of grace. The nature and tendency of every principle must appear with the greatest clearness in its most

perfect exercises. The Apostle James says, by works is faith made perfect; and from this he argues, that works are the chief evidence of faith. James, 2 : 22. And the Apostle John, after he has repeatedly told us, that love is made perfect by our keeping the commandments of Christ, observes, that perfect love casteth out fear. 1 John, 4 : 18.

Argument IV. Another circumstance which makes it apparent that holy practice is the principal evidence which we ought to make use of in judging both of our own and of the sincerity of others, is, that *this evidence is above all others insisted on in Scripture.* A common acquaintance with the Bible will be sufficient to convince any one, that this is far more insisted on, as an indication of true piety, than any other evidence. In the New Testament, where Christ and his apostles are purposely directing us to marks of true godliness, this is almost exclusively mentioned. It may be observed also, that Christ and his apostles very often, in speaking upon the great doctrines of religion, so far show what the nature of true godliness is, that, by just consequence, we may infer what are the signs by which it is indicated. They also frequently, and with design, propose criterions for the trial of professors, introducing what they say with such expressions as these: "By this are manifest the children of God, and the children of the devil: hereby we shall assure our hearts," &c. But I find no place, in which either Christ or his apostles point out signs of godliness, but where Christian practice is almost the only thing insisted on. In many of those places indeed, "love to the brethren" is spoken of as a sign of godliness; and there is no other virtuous affection, or disposition, so often mentioned as a mark of true grace; but then the Scriptures ex-

plain themselves to mean chiefly this affection as exercised and expressed in *practice*, or in *deeds* of love. The Apostle JOHN, who, above all others, insists on love to the brethren as a sign of godliness, very evidently means love terminating in practice: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother, abideth in death. Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us love not in word, neither in tongue, but in deed," that is, practically, "and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." So that when the Scriptures insist on our loving one another, as a great sign of godliness, we are not thereby to understand the mere workings of affection, so much as our cordially practising all the duties we owe to our brethren: all that the New Testament repeatedly tells us is comprehended in the duty of loving others. Rom. 13: 8 and 10; Gal. 5: 14; Matt. 22: 39, 40. So that, in reality, there is no passage in the New Testament, in which a sign of godliness is pointed out, in which holy practice is not chiefly intended. This clearly proves that holy practice is the chief evidence of real godliness. As therefore, we profess to make the word of God our rule, we should undoubtedly try ourselves by those marks to which the Scriptures direct us for that purpose. And surely those things which Christ and his apostles chiefly insisted on, as signs of grace, ministers ought chiefly to insist on with the same view. To insist much on those things on which the Scriptures insist little; and to insist little upon those things upon which the Scriptures insist much, is a most dan-

gerous error. The Scriptures were made for man, and they are by Infinite Wisdom fitted for our use and benefit: we should, therefore, make them our guide in judging of religion and of ourselves.

Holy practice is not only more frequently mentioned and insisted on than other signs; but in many places it is represented as the chief evidence. If God was now to speak from heaven to resolve our doubts respecting marks of godliness, and should point out some particular sign, by which we might know with certainty whether we were sincerely godly or not; should we not regard it as a matter beyond doubt, that the evidence mentioned was given as a special, distinguishing sign of true godliness—a mark which, above all others, was to be decisive? Now this is precisely the case with the evidence of which I am speaking. God has very often expressed himself in the following manner concerning Christian practice: “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, *he it is that loveth me.*” John, 14: 21. This declaration, as appears from the context, was made to comfort his disciples after his departure. I would observe, that not only the emphasis with which Christ expresses himself is remarkable, but also his repeatedly enforcing the subject, as he does in the context: “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” ver. 15. “If a man love me, he will keep my words.” ver. 23. In the next chapter he repeatedly makes similar declarations: “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples.” ver. 8. “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” ver. 14.—“*Hereby* we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.” 1 John, 2: 3. “Whoso keepeth his word, *in him verily* is the love of God perfected: *hereby* know

we that we are in him." ver. 5. "Let us love in deed and in truth: *hereby* we know that we are of the truth," chap. 3:18, 19. And how evidently is holy practice mentioned as the grand mark of distinction between the children of God and the children of the devil, in the tenth verse of the same chapter: "In *this* the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." "He that doeth righteousness, is righteous—he that committeth sin is of the devil." ver. 7, 8. We have a similar emphatical declaration in 2 John, 6, "*This is the love of God*, that we walk after his commandments;" that is, as we must understand the expression, This is the proper evidence of love. Again, in 1 John, 5:3. "*This is the love of God*, that we keep his commandments." So the Apostle James, speaking of the proper evidences of real piety, says, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, *is this*, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep" ourselves "unspotted from the world." James, 1:27.

On the other hand, the Scriptures never use such emphatical expressions respecting any other signs of hypocrisy, as that of unholy practice: "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Gal. 6:7. "Be not deceived; neither fornicators, —nor idolaters, —nor adulterers, —nor thieves, —nor drunkards, &c. shall inherit the kingdom of God." 1 Cor. 6:9, 10. "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." 1 John, 2:4. "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's religion is vain." James, 1:26. A "highway shall be there—and it shall be called, The way of holiness; the unclean shall not

pass over it." Isa. 35:8. "And there shall in no wise enter into" the celestial city "any thing that worketh abomination or maketh a lie." Rev. 21:27.

Argument V. Another circumstance which renders it evident that holy practice is the best proof of our sincerity as professors of religion, not only to the world, but to our own consciences, is, that this is the chief evidence which will hereafter be *made use of before the judgment seat of God*; according to which the sentences then pronounced will be regulated, and the state of every professor of religion unalterably determined. At the last day there will be a manifest and conspicuous trial of professors, at which evidence will be produced. But the final judgment of men, in order to their everlasting retribution, will not be a trial of the state of their hearts for the satisfaction of the Divine Mind; but a declarative judgment, a manifestation of the justice of God to their own consciences and to the world. Hence the day of judgment is called the day of the "revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Rom. 2:5. The design of the future trial and judgment of men, will be especially the clear manifestation of the righteous judgment of God to the conscience of each individual. The Scriptures abundantly teach us, that the chief evidences of which the Judge will make use, and according to which the final state of every man will be determined, will be our works, or moral conduct in this world: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works; and the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell," or the unseen world, "delivered up the dead which were in them; and

every man was judged according to" his "works." Rev. 20 : 12, 13. See also 2 Cor. 5 : 10. In that most particular description of the day of judgment in the 25th chapter of Matthew, the moral conduct of men is the only evidence mentioned by Christ as that by which the sentence of each individual will be regulated.

Hence we may undoubtedly infer, that our works, as explained above, are the most decisive criterion as to our real state ; and in forming a judgment of ourselves now, we should certainly adopt that evidence which our supreme Judge will chiefly make use of when we come to stand before him at the last day.

From what has been said, it is abundantly clear, that Christian practice is the most decisive evidence of the gracious sincerity of professors, both to themselves and to others. The saints may have other exercises of grace besides these, which are very satisfying to themselves ; but still this is the chief and most decisive evidence. There may be several circumstances which show that a certain tree is a fig-tree, but the most decisive evidence is that it actually bears figs.

Christian practice is that evidence which CONFIRMS EVERY OTHER INDICATION OF TRUE GODLINESS. There is not one grace of the Spirit of God, of the existence of which, in any professor of religion, Christian practice is not the most decisive evidence.

Practice is the most decisive proof of the saving *knowledge of God*. This appears from a passage already quoted: "Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." It is in vain for us to profess that we know God, if in works we deny him. Tit. 1 : 16. And if we know God, but glorify

him not as God, our knowledge will only lead to our condemnation. Rom. 1 : 21. The distinguishing mark of that knowledge which saves and makes happy, is that it is practical : " If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." John, 13 : 17. " To depart from evil, is understanding." Job, 28 : 28.

Holy practice is the most decisive evidence of the reality of our *repentance*. When the Jews professed repentance, confessing their sins to John, while he was preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, he directed them to the best way of obtaining and exhibiting proper evidence of the truth of their repentance, when he said to them, " Bring forth fruits meet for repentance." Matt. 3 : 8. Agreeable to this was the practice of the Apostle Paul. See Acts, 26 : 20. Pardon and mercy are often promised to him who, as an evidence of true repentance, forsakes his sins. Prov. 28 : 13; Isaiah, 55 : 7, and many other places.

Holy practice is the best evidence of *saving faith*. The Apostle James speaks of works, as justifying our profession of faith, or manifesting the sincerity of our profession, not only to the world, but to our own consciences. James, 2 : 21-24. In the 20th and 26th verses, he speaks of the practical nature of faith as constituting its very essence. Doubtless, then, practice is the best evidence of faith.

Practice is the most decisive proof of our having *come to Christ as our Savior*. Our coming to Christ savingly, is our coming to him so as to forsake all for him, so far as circumstances may require. Christ promises us eternal life on condition of our coming to him ; but he requires such a coming as that to which he directed the young man who came to inquire what he should do that he might have eternal life : Christ

bade him "go and sell all that he had, and come and follow him." Had he really consented, the proper evidence of his having done so would have been his actually doing as he was commanded. When Christ called Levi the publican, he was sitting at the receipt of custom, and occupied with his worldly gains; the compliance of his mind with the invitation was manifested by his actually leaving all and following the Savior. Luke, 5 : 27, 28. Christ and other things are set before us together, in order that we may practically cleave to the one, and forsake the other; and our practically cleaving to Christ, is our acceptance of him. Our cleaving to Christ in practice, is that act of the mind which may with the greatest propriety be denominated the coming of the soul to Christ.

Practice is the most decisive evidence of our trusting in Christ for salvation. The word *trust*, according to the more ordinary use of it, conveys the idea of our being induced to make some venture in practice, or to do something on the credit of the sufficiency and faithfulness of some other person; and therefore the proper evidence of this exercise of the mind, is our actually making the venture required. Hence it is, that, in complying with the difficulties of Christian practice, in a dependence on the sufficiency and faithfulness of Christ, we are said to trust in him for everlasting life. We depend on such promises as the following: "He that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it." Matt. 10 : 39. Abraham, the father of believers, trusted in Christ, and by faith forsook his own country, in a reliance on the covenant of grace which God had established with him. Heb. 11 : 8, 9. Thus also, "by faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people

of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Heb. 11 : 24, &c. By faith others exposed themselves to be sawn in sunder, and to be slain by the sword; endured the trial of cruel mockings, of scourges, of bonds, and of imprisonments; they wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented. In this sense the Apostle Paul by faith trusted in Christ: "For which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." 2 Tim. 1 : 12. He who, on the credit of what he hears of a future world, forsakes all, at least so far as there is occasion, making every thing subservient to his everlasting interest, is the only person who can with propriety be said to venture on the report of the Gospel; and this is the proper evidence of a real trust in Christ for salvation.

Practice is the proper evidence of a gracious *love*, both as that affection respects God and our fellow-men. This is clearly taught by very numerous passages of Scripture already quoted.

Practice is the proper evidence of *humility*. That expression or manifestation of humility which God requires, and to which therefore we should pay particular attention, is *walking humbly*. Micah, 6 : 8.

Practice is the proper evidence of the *fear of God*: "The fear of the Lord, is to hate evil." Prov. 8 : 13. "By the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil." Chap. 16 : 6. See also Psalm 34 : 11, &c.; Prov. 3 : 7; Job, 1 : 8.

Practice is the proper evidence of a gracious *hope* "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." 1 John, 3 : 3. Patient con-

tinuance in well doing, through the difficulties and trials of the Christian course, is often mentioned as the proper expression and fruit of Christian hope. "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you, at the revelation of Jesus Christ, as obedient children," &c. 1 Pet. 1 : 13, 14. "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope." 1 Thess. 1 : 3. "Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments." Psalm 119 : 166. "That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments." Psalm 78 : 7.

A cheerful performance of duty is the proper evidence of a true holy *joy*: "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness." Isaiah 64 : 5. "The abundance of their joy—abounded unto the riches of their liberality." 2 Cor. 8 : 2.

Practice is the proper evidence of Christian *fortitude*. A good soldier is proved, not at home, but in the field of battle. 1 Cor. 9 : 25, 26 ; 2 Tim, 2 : 3-5.

As holy practice is the chief evidence of our being possessed of grace; so *the degree* in which our experience is productive of practice, shows *the degree in which our experience is spiritual and divine*. Whatever pretensions we may make to great discoveries, great love and joy, they are no further to be regarded than as they actually influence our practice. Allowance must indeed be made for natural temper; but still our progress in grace is ascertained by the degree in which it is efficacious in practice. The effect of grace is as great, and the alteration as remarkable, in a person of a bad natural temper, as in another. Although a person of such a temper will not behave himself so well

with the same degree of grace, as another person would do, yet the change may be as great, because a person of a good natural temper did not behave himself so ill before conversion.

Thus having endeavored to prove that Christian practice must be the proper and most decisive evidence of saving grace; before I conclude this Treatise, I would say something in reply to TWO OBJECTIONS, which may perhaps be raised against what has been advanced upon this subject.

Objection I. It may perhaps be said, that what has been insisted on, is evidently contrary to the opinion prevailing among good people, that professors should judge of their state chiefly by their feelings and experience.

I answer, This opinion is no doubt correct, and deserves to be received amongst good people; but it is a great mistake to suppose that what has been said, is at all contrary to that opinion. Evangelical, or holy practice, is spiritual practice, and not mere corporeal motion. It is the exertion of a spirit, animating, commanding and directing the body to which it is united, and over which it has power given it by the Creator. And therefore the main thing in holy practice, is the disposition of the mind. The exercises of grace, of which the believer is sensible, constitute Christian experience; and this experience consists as much in those operations of grace upon the will, by which our actions are immediately directed, as in mere mental exercises. These exercises of grace are not the less a part of Christian experience, because they are immediately connected with our actions. For instance, ardent love to God is not the less a part of gracious experience

because it is that which immediately produces some self-denying or extraordinary action, tending to promote the honor and glory of God.

To represent Christian experience and practice as properly and altogether distinct, is wrong. Indeed, all Christian experience is not necessarily connected with practice; but all Christian practice is in reality experience. Holy practice is one kind, or part of Christian experience; and both reason and Scripture represent it as the chief, the most important, and the most distinguishing part of it. "He judgeth the cause of the poor and the needy: was not this to know me? saith the Lord." Jer. 22 : 16. Our acquaintance with God certainly belongs to experimental religion; but this is represented as consisting chiefly in that experience which is included in holy practice. The love of God, and the fear of God, are a part of experimental religion; but the scriptures already quoted, represent them as consisting chiefly in practice: "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." 1 John, 5 : 3. See also 2 John, 6. "Come, ye children, hearken unto me—I will teach you the fear of the Lord: Depart from evil and do good." Psa. 34 : 11, &c. It was such experience as this, in which Hezekiah took comfort, and said, "Remember, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart." The Psalmist chiefly insists upon such experience as this in the 119th Psalm. The Apostle Paul insists upon this kind of experience, in many places in his epistles. See Rom. 1 : 9; 2 Cor. 1 : 12; 4 : 13; 5 : 7-14; 6 : 4-7; Gal. 2 : 20; Phil. 3 : 7, 8; Col. 1 : 29. 1 Thess. 2 : 8-10. It was this kind of experience from which this blessed apostle derived support and comfort when he was about to suffer martyrdom: "For I am

now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." 2 Tim. 4: 6, 7.

And not only does the most important and distinguishing part of Christian experience consist in spiritual practice; but such is the nature of these exercises of grace, that nothing else is so properly called by the name of experimental religion. For that experience which, in these exercises of grace, proves effectual at the time of trial, is the proper experiment as to the sincerity of our profession and the power of our religious principles. As that is called experimental philosophy, which brings opinions to the test of fact; so that is properly called experimental religion, which brings religious affections to a similar test.

There is a kind of religious practice which is not connected with experience, and which, in the sight of God, is esteemed good for nothing. And there is what is called experience, which has no connexion with practice; and this is worse than nothing. Whenever we feel a disposition to treat God as his infinite perfections and our dependance upon him demand, and at the same time are placed in circumstances of trial, and find this disposition effectual in the experiment, we are then the subjects of the most satisfactory experience. Religion consists much in holy affection; but those exercises of affection which are most characteristic of true religion, are practical exercises. Human friendship consists much in affection; but these strong exercises of affection, which actually induce us to make great exertions, or sacrifices, for others, are the most, and indeed the only decisive proofs of true friendship.

There is nothing in this at all contrary to what is

asserted by some sound divines, that is, that there are no sure proofs of grace, but the acts of grace. For those operative practical exercises of grace, may still be the most decisive proofs of the existence of grace. Many of these exercises of grace, following one another, under various trials, may also render the evidence still more decisive, as one act confirms another. The disciples, when they first saw Jesus Christ, after his resurrection, had good evidence that he was alive; but by conversing with him forty days, they had still more decisive proofs that he was risen indeed.

The witness, or seal of the Holy Spirit, of which we read, is no doubt the effect of that Spirit upon the human heart, in the implantation and exercises of grace there, and so consists in experience. Neither can it be doubted, but that this seal of the Spirit is the most decisive evidence of our adoption that we can possibly obtain. But in the manifest exercises of grace, already described, the Holy Spirit gives evidence, and sets his seal in the most clear and satisfactory manner. It has been abundantly demonstrated by the experience of the Christian church, that in general Christ communicates to his people, by the Holy Spirit, the most decisive and evident marks of their sonship, in those effectual exercises of grace under trials, which have been spoken of above. 'This has been manifest in the full assurance and indescribable joy of many of the martyrs. "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." 1 Pet. 4:14. "We—rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and—glory in tribulations also." Rom. 5:2, 3. This is agreeable to what the Apostle Paul often declares, in reference to what he experienced in his various trials. When the Apostle Peter, in the passage

prefixed to this Treatise, speaks of the joy unspeakable and full of glory, which the Christians to whom he wrote experienced, he has respect to what they felt under persecution, as appears from the context. It is evident from other parts of the chapter, that when the Apostle Paul speaks of the witness of the Spirit, in Rom. 8 : 15-17, he has an immediate respect to what the Christians experienced in their exercises of love to God, while suffering persecution.

Objection II. Some professors may be disposed to object against what has been said of Christian practice, as the chief evidence of grace, that this is a legal doctrine; and that by making practice of such great importance in religion, we magnify works, and lead men to depend on their own righteousness, to the disparagement of the glory of free grace, and in opposition to the doctrine "of justification by faith alone."

But this objection is altogether without foundation. In what respect is it inconsistent with the freeness of the grace of God, that holy practice should be a sign of our interest in that grace? It is our works being considered as the price by which the divine favor is procured, and not their being merely the sign of it, that is inconsistent with the freeness of that favor. A beggar, viewing the money he has received as a token of the kindness of him who gave it, may still regard the gift as being perfectly free and undeserved. It is his having received money as the reward of something done, which is inconsistent with the free kindness of the giver. The true notion of the freeness of the grace of God to sinners, is not that no holy and amiable qualifications or actions are fruits, and therefore signs of our interest in that grace; but that it is not any qualification or action of ours which recommends us to the

divine favor. Gracious kindness is shown to the unworthy: goodness flows from the fountain of goodness, while there is no amiableness in the object upon which it rests. This is the true notion of justification without works. It is not the worthiness of our actions, or any thing in us, which in any measure is accepted as an atonement for the guilt of sin, or as a recommendation to the divine favor. We are justified *solely* through the righteousness of Christ. When works are opposed to faith, with regard to our justification, and it is said that we are justified by faith and not by works, it is meant that neither our works, nor any dispositions we possess, at all recommend us to an interest in Christ and the blessings of his salvation; but that these blessings are communicated only through faith, or by our souls receiving Christ as our Savior. But that no worthiness in us *recommends* us to God, is no argument that nothing in us is *a sign* of interest in his favor.

If the doctrines of free grace, and of justification by faith alone, are inconsistent with the importance of holy practice, as a sign of grace; then they are inconsistent with the importance of any thing in us, regarded as a sign of grace; any holiness, or any experience; for it is as much contrary to the doctrines of free grace, and of justification by faith alone, that either of these should be the righteousness by which we are justified, as that holy practice should. To treat holy obedience with indifference because we are not justified by works, is the same thing in effect as treating all religion with indifference, even all true holiness and gracious experience; for all these are included, when the Scriptures say, we are not justified by works. By works, in this case, is meant every thing that we experience, as well as every thing that we do; every Exercise of the

mind, as well as every exertion of the body. If we were justified by any of these, we should, in a scripture sense, be justified by works; and therefore, if it is not legal, nor contrary to the doctrine of justification without works, to insist on any of these, as evidences of our interest in Christ, neither is it, with the same view, to insist on the importance of holy practice. It would be legal to suppose, that holy practice gives us *a title* to the blessings of salvation; but it is not legal to suppose, that holy practice is the proper and most decisive *evidence of our sincerity*.

The Apostle James did not think it legal to say, that Abraham was justified by works in this sense. The Spirit that indited the Scriptures, did not think that the absolute necessity of a holy practice, in this respect, was inconsistent with the freeness of grace; for in general the sacred writings teach them in union with each other. In Rev. 21:6, 7, it is said, "I will give unto him that is athirst, of the fountain of the water of life freely;" and then it is immediately added, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things;" as though behaving well in the Christian race and warfare, was the condition of the promise. In the next chapter, it is said, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city;" and then, in the next verse, it is declared that liars, whoremongers, murderers, &c., shall be excluded; and yet, in the two verses immediately following, an invitation is given to all to come, and take of the water of life *freely*. Similar is the invitation to sinners to accept of *free grace*, in Isaiah, 55. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money

and without price ;” and yet in the continuation of this passage, the sinner’s forsaking his wicked practice, is mentioned as necessary to his obtaining mercy : “ Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts ; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” Ver. 7. See also Isaiah, 1 : 16, &c. Hence it is evident that the freeness of grace, and the necessity of a holy practice, which are often joined together in Scripture, are not inconsistent with each other. Nor does it at all diminish the importance of faith, that its exercises and effects, in practice, are the chief indications of our possessing it, any more than it lessens the importance of animal life, that motion and action are the chief signs of its existence.

Hence it also appears, that in what has been said of the importance of holy practice, as the most decisive mark of sincerity, there is nothing legal : nothing derogatory to the freedom and sovereignty of Gospel grace ; nothing in the least clashing with the Gospel doctrine of justification by faith alone, without the works of the law ; nothing in the least tending to lessen the glory of the Mediator, and our dependence on his righteousness ; nothing infringing on the special prerogatives of faith, in the affair of salvation ; nothing in any way detracting from the glory of God, and of his mercy ; nothing tending to exalt man, or to lessen his dependence and obligations. So that if any believers are opposed to such an importance of holy practice as that insisted on above, it must arise from an inconsiderate aversion to the word *works* ; when they might with equal reason dislike the words holiness, grace, religion. experience, and even faith itself ; for to make a righteousness of our faith, experience, &c. is as legal, and as

inconsistent with the new covenant, as to make a righteousness of holy practice.

It is highly injurious to religion to make light of those things upon which the Scriptures insist most: for instance, to neglect the exercises and effectual operations of grace in practice, and to insist almost wholly on discoveries and our extraordinary experience. It is in vain to look for any better signs than those which the Scriptures have most expressly mentioned as marks of godliness. Those persons who profess, by their extraordinary experience and insight into the nature of things, to point out more distinguishing criterions for the detection of hypocrisy, than those which the Scriptures give us, are but ingenious to the confusion of their own minds, and the minds of others; their penetration and sagacity are, in the sight of God, but refined foolishness and sagacious delusion. To such the words of Agur are applicable: "Every word of God is pure;—add not thou unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." Prov. 30: 5, 6. Our discernment and wisdom, with regard to the hearts of men, are not much to be trusted. We see but a little way into the state of the human soul. The means are so many by which our passions may be moved, without any supernatural influence; the springs of our affections are so various, and so secret; so many things may, at the same time, and in conjunction, influence our affections; for instance, the imagination, natural temper, education, the common influences of the Holy Spirit, a surprising concurrence of affecting circumstances, an extraordinary coincidence in the course of our thoughts, together with the subtle management of invisible, malicious spirits; that no philosophy, or experience, will ever be sufficient to guide

us safely, without our closely following the directions which God has given us in his holy word. Our heavenly Father has no doubt his reasons for insisting on some things as marks by which we should try ourselves, rather than by others. Perhaps he knows that those criterions are attended by less perplexity, and that we are less liable to be deceived by them, than by others. He best knows our nature, and the nature of his own operations; he is best acquainted with the means of securing our safety; he knows what allowance to make for different states of his church, and different tempers of particular persons; and therefore it is our wisdom not to take his work out of his hands, but to follow his prescriptions, and judge of ourselves as he directs us. If we do otherwise, no wonder if we are bewildered, confounded, and fatally deluded. But if we are in the habit of looking chiefly at those things as marks of piety, which Christ, and his apostles, and the prophets, most earnestly insisted on, so that in judging of ourselves, and of others, we chiefly regard the practical exercises and effects of grace, our conduct will be attended by the happiest consequences; it will be the means of delivering us from innumerable perplexities, arising from the various schemes which have been invented for the purpose of ascertaining the real state of professors; it will, above all things, lead to the conviction of deluded hypocrites; it will tend to prevent professors from neglecting strictness of life, and to promote their circumspection and earnestness in the Christian walk. Were we guided uniformly by Scripture rules in judging of professors of religion, it would become usual for men to exhibit their piety more by an amiable behavior, than by frequently and ostensively relating their experience; we should get

into the way of appearing lively in religion, more by activity in the service of God, and of our generation, than by the fluency of our tongues; Christians that are intimate friends would converse together of their experience and comforts in a manner better becoming Christian humility, and more to each other's profit; many occasions of spiritual pride would be prevented; the main stumbling-blocks against experimental and powerful religion would be removed; and religion would be declared and manifested in such a way that, instead of hardening spectators, and exceedingly promoting infidelity and atheism, it would, above all things, tend to convince men that there is a reality in religion, and to awaken them and win them to a sense of its importance and excellency. Thus the light of professors would so shine before men, that others, seeing their good works, would glorify their Father who is in heaven.

THE END.

AN

A L A R M:

TO

UNCONVERTED SINNERS

IN

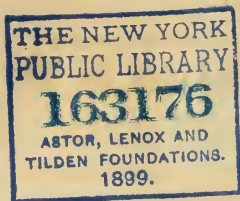
A Serious Treatise on Conversion.

BY JOSEPH ALLEINE.

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. In this Edition some obsolete words and phrases are altered, and a few passages omitted.—The Author's Six Questions to the Unconverted, and Counsels for the Converted are added

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INTRODUCTION.



AN EARNEST INVITATION TO SINNERS TO TURN TO GOD.

DEARLY beloved, I gladly acknowledge myself a debtor to you all, and am concerned, as I would be found a good steward to the household of God, to give to every one his portion. But the physician is most solicitous for those patients whose case is most doubtful and hazardous; and the father's concern is especially turned toward his dying child. So unconverted souls among you call for special solicitude and earnest effort to pluck them as brands from the burning; therefore to them I shall first apply myself in these lines.

But whence shall I fetch my argument? Wherewith shall I win them? O that I could tell! I would write to them in tears, I would weep out every argument, I would empty my veins for ink, I would petition them on my knees. O how thankful should I be if they would be prevailed with to repent and live!

How long have I labored for you! How often would I have gathered you! This is what I have prayed for and studied for these many years, that I might bring you to God. O that I might now do it! Will you yet be entreated?

But, Lord, how insufficient am I for this work? Alas! wherewith shall I pierce the scales of Leviathan, or make the heart to feel that it is as hard as adamant, hard as the nether mill-stone? Shall I go and speak to the tenants of the grave, and hope the dead will obey me

and come forth ? Shall I make an oration to the rocks, or declaim to the mountains, and think to move them with arguments ? Shall I give the blind to see ? From the beginning of the world was it not heard that a man opened the eyes of the blind ; but thou, O Lord, canst pierce the heart of the sinner ; I can but draw the bow at a venture, but do thou direct the arrow, slay the sin, and save the soul of the sinner that casts his eyes on these pages.

There is no entering into heaven but by the strait passage of the second birth ; “without holiness you shall never see God.” Now set yourselves then to seek him. Set up the Lord Jesus in your hearts—kiss the Son, embrace the tenders of mercy, touch his sceptre and live ; for why will ye die ? I beg not for myself, but would have you happy : this is the prize I run for. My soul’s desire and prayer for you is, that you may be saved.

What greater joy to a minister than to hear of souls born unto Christ by his instrumentality ?

I beseech you suffer plainness and freedom with you in your deepest concern. I am not playing the orator ; these lines are upon a weighty errand indeed—to convince, to convert, and to save you. If I would quiet a crying infant, I might sing to him in a pleasing mood, and rock him asleep ; but when the child is fallen into the fire, the parent takes another course ; he will not try to still him with a song or a trifle. I know, if we succeed not with you, you are lost ; if we cannot get your consent to “arise and come away,” you perish for ever : no conversion, and no salvation : we must get your good will, or leave you miserable.

Some of you do not know what I mean by conversion, and in vain shall I attempt to persuade you to that

which you do not understand ; therefore for your sakes I will show *what this conversion is*. Others cherish secret hopes of mercy, though they continue as they are ; and for them I must show the *necessity of conversion*. Others are like to harden themselves with a vain conceit that they are converted already ; to them I must show the *marks of the unconverted*. Others, because they feel no harm, fear none, and so sleep upon the top of the mast ; to them I shall show the *misery of the unconverted*. Others sit still, because they see not their way of escape ; to them I shall show the *means of conversion*. And finally, for the quickening of all, I shall close with the *motives to conversion*.

CHAPTER I.

Showing what Conversion is not, and correcting some mistakes about it.

Let the blind Samaritans worship they know not what, John, 4 : 22. Let the heathen Athenians inscribe their altar "To the unknown God." Acts 17 : 22. Let Papists commend ignorance as the mother of devotion. They that know man's constitution, and the nature of the reasonable soul's operation, cannot but know that the understanding has such empire in the soul, that he who will go rationally to work must labor to let in light there. And therefore, that you may not mistake me, I shall first show you what I mean by conversion.

Truly the devil hath made many counterfeits of conversion, and cheats one with this, and another with that ; and such craft and artifice he hath in his mystery

of deceits, that (if it were possible) he would deceive the very elect. Now, that I may cure the ruinous mistake of some who think they are converted when they are not, I shall show you the nature of conversion, both what it is not, and what it is.

We will begin with the negative.

It is not the taking upon us the *profession* of Christianity. Christianity is more than a name. If we will hear Paul, it lies not in word, but in power. 1 Cor. 4:20. And are there not many that mention the name of the Lord Jesus, that yet depart not from iniquity? 2 Tim. 2:19, and "profess they know God, but in works deny him?" Titus, 1:16. And will God receive these for true converts? What! converts from sin, when yet they live in sin! We find not only professors, but preachers of Christ, and wonder-workers, rejected because evil-workers. Matt. 7:22, 23.

It is not putting on the badge of Christ in *baptism*. Ananias, and Sapphira, and Simon Magus were baptized as well as the rest. How fondly do many mistake here, deceiving and being deceived! dreaming that effectual grace is necessarily tied to the external administration of baptism, (which, what is it but to revive the popish tenet of the sacraments working grace?) and thus, that every baptized person is regenerated, not only sacramentally, but really and properly! Hence men fancy, that, being regenerated already when baptized, they need no farther work.

But if this were so, then all that have been baptized must necessarily be saved, because the promise of pardon and salvation is made to conversion and regeneration. Acts, 3:19. Matt. 19:28.

And indeed, were conversion and baptism the same, then men would do well to carry but a certificate of

their baptism when they died, and upon sight of this there were no doubt of their admission into heaven.

In short, if there be no more necessary to conversion, or regeneration, than to be baptized, this will fly directly in the face of that scripture, Matt. 7:13, 14, as well as multitudes of others. For, first, we shall then no more say, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way;" for if all that were baptized are saved, the door is exceeding wide, and we shall henceforth say, "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth unto life." For if this be true, thousands may go in abreast; and we will no more teach that the righteous are scarcely saved, or that there is need of such a stir in taking the kingdom of heaven by violence, and striving to enter in. Surely, if the way be so easy as many suppose, that there is little more necessary than to be baptized and to cry, "Lord, have mercy," we need not put ourselves to such seeking, and knocking, and wrestling, as the word requires in order to salvation. Secondly, if this be true, we shall no more say, "few there be that find it;" yea, we will rather say, "few there be that miss it." We shall no more say, that of the "many" that are "called, but few are chosen," Matt. 22:14, and that even of the professing "Israel but a remnant shall be saved." Rom. 9:27. If this doctrine be true, we shall not say any more with the disciples, "Who then shall be saved?" but rather, who then shall not be saved? Then, if a man be baptized, though he be a fornicator, or a railer or covetous, or a drunkard, yet he shall inherit the kingdom of God. 1 Cor. 5:11, and 6:9, 10.

But some will reply, Such as these, though they did receive regenerating grace in baptism, are since fallen away, and must be renewed again or else they cannot be saved.

I answer, 1, That there is an infallible connection between regeneration and salvation, as we have already shown; and I long to be farther évidencing, but that it is against designed brevity. 2. Then man must be born again a second time, which carries a great deal of absurdity in its face: and why may not men be twice born in nature as well as in grace? But, 3, and above all, this grants however the thing I contend for, that whatever men do or pretend to receive in baptism, if they be found afterward to be grossly ignorant, or profane, or formal, without the power of godliness, they "must be born again," or else be shut out of the kingdom of God. So then they must have more to plead for themselves than their baptismal regeneration.

Well, in this you see all are agreed, that, be it more or less that is received in baptism, if men are evidently unsanctified, they must be renewed again by a thorough and powerful change, or else they cannot escape the damnation of hell. Then "be not deceived; God is not mocked." Whether it be your baptism, or whatever else you pretend, I tell you from the living God, that if any of you be a prayerless person, or unclean, or malicious, or covetous, or riotous, or a scoffer, or a lover of evil company, Prov. 13 : 20, in a word, if you are not a holy, strict, and self-denying Christian, you cannot be saved.

Paul, while unconverted, touching the righteousness which is in the law, was blameless. The Pharisee could say, "I am no extortioner, adulterer, unjust," &c. Thou must have something *more than all this* to show, or else, however thou mayest justify thyself, God will condemn thee. I condemn not morality, but warn thee not to rest in it: piety includes morality, as Christianity doth humanity, and grace reason; but we must not divide the tables.

It is also manifest that men may have a *form of godliness*, without the power. Men may pray long, and fast often, and hear gladly, and be very forward in the service of God, though costly and expensive, and yet be strangers to conversion. They must have more to plead than that they go to church, give alms, and make use of prayer, to prove themselves sound converts. There is no outward service but a hypocrite may do it, even to the "giving all his goods to feed the poor, and his body to be burned."

Conversion is not the mere *chaining up of corruption* by education, human laws, or the force of incumbent affliction. It is too common and easy to mistake education for grace; but if this were enough, who a better man than Jehoshaphat? While Jehoiada his uncle lived, he was very forward in God's service, and calls upon him to repair the house of the Lord, 2 Kings, 12: 2, 7;—but here was nothing more than good education all this while; for when his good tutor was taken out of the way, he appears to have been but a wolf chained up, and falls into idolatry.

In short, conversion consists not in illumination or conviction, in a superficial change or partial reformation. An apostate may be an enlightened man, and a Felix tremble under conviction, and a Herod do many things. It is one thing to have sin alarmed only by convictions, and another to have it crucified by converting grace. Many, because they have been troubled in conscience for their sins, think well of their case, miserably mistaking conviction for conversion. With these Cain might have passed for a convert, who ran up and down the world like a man distracted, under the rage of a guilty conscience. Others think, that because they have given over their riotous courses, and

are broken off from evil company or some particular lust, and are reduced to sobriety and civility, they are now no other than real converts ; forgetting that there is a vast difference between being sanctified and civilized ; and that many seek to enter into the kingdom of heaven, and are not far from it, and arrive to the *almost* of Christianity, and yet fall short at last. While conscience holds the whip over them, many will pray, hear, read, and forbear their delightful sins ; but no sooner is the lion asleep than they are at their sins again. Who more religious than the Jews when God's hand was upon them : yet no sooner was the affliction over, than they forgot God. Thou mayst have forsaken a troublesome sin, and have escaped the gross pollutions of the world, and yet in all this not have changed thy carnal nature.

You may cast lead out of the rude mass into the more comely proportion of a plant, and then into the shape of a beast, and thence into the form and features of a man, yet all the while it is but lead still ; so a man may pass through divers transmutations, from ignorance to knowledge, from profaneness to civility, thence to a form of religion, and all this time he is but carnal and unregenerate whilst his nature remains unchanged.

Hear then, O sinners, hear as you would live. Why would you wilfully deceive yourselves, or build your hopes upon the sand ? I know that he may find hard work that goes to pluck away your hopes. It cannot but be ungrateful to you, and truly it is not pleasing to me, I set about it as a surgeon when about to cut off a mortified limb from his well-beloved friend, which of necessity he must do, though with an aching heart. But understand me—I am only taking down the ruinous house, which will otherwise speedily fall of itself and

bury you in the ruins, that I may build it fair, strong, and firm for ever. The hope of the wicked shall perish. And hadst not thou better, O sinner, let the word convince thee now in time, and let go thy false and self-deluding hopes, than have death too late to open thine eyes, and find thyself in hell before thou art aware? I should be a false and faithless shepherd if I should not tell you, that you, who have built your hopes upon no better grounds than these before mentioned, are yet in your sins. Let conscience speak: What is it that you have to plead for yourselves? Is it that you wear Christ's livery? that you bear his name? that you are of the visible church? that you have knowledge in the points of religion, are civilized, perform religious duties, are just in your dealings, have been troubled in conscience for your sins? I tell you from the Lord, these pleas will never be accepted at God's bar; all this, though good in itself, will not prove you converted, and so will not suffice to your salvation. O look about you and bethink yourselves of turning speedily and entirely. Study your own hearts; rest not till God has made thorough work with you; for you must be other men, or else you are lost men.

But if these characters be short of conversion, what shall I say of the *profane sinner*? It may be he will scarcely cast his eyes or lend his ear to this discourse; but if there be any such reading or within hearing, he must know from the Lord that made him, that he is far from the kingdom of God. May a man be true in his dealings, and yet not be justified of God? what then will become of thee, O wretched man, whose conscience tells thee thou art false in thy trade, and false to thy word, and makest thy advantage by a lying tongue? If men may be enlightened and brought

to the external performance of holy duties, and yet go down to perdition for resting in them and sitting down on this side of conversion, what will become of you, O miserable families, that live without God in the world? and of you, O wretched sinners, with whom God is scarcely in all your thoughts; that are so ignorant that you cannot, or so careless that you will not pray? O repent and be converted; break off your sins by righteousness; away to Christ for pardoning and renewing grace; give up yourselves to him, to walk with him in holiness, or you shall never see God. O that you would take the warnings of God! In his name I once more admonish you: turn ye at my reproof. Forsake the foolish, and live. Be sober, righteous, and godly. Wash your hands, ye sinners; purify your hearts, ye double-minded. Cease to do evil, learn to do well. But if you will not, you must die.

CHAPTER II.

Showing positively what Conversion is.

I may not leave you with your eyes half open, like him that saw "men as trees walking." The word is profitable for doctrine as well as reproof. And therefore, having thus exposed some dangerous mistakes, I would guide you at length into the way of truth.

Conversion then, in short, lies in the thorough change both of the heart and life. I shall briefly describe it in its nature and causes.

1. The *author* is the Spirit of God, and therefore it is called "the sanctification of the Spirit," and "the renewing of the Holy Ghost," yet not excluding the other

persons in the Trinity ; for the apostle teacheth us to “ bless the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for that he hath begotten us again.” And Christ is said to give repentance unto Israel, and is called the “ everlasting Father,” and we his seed, and the children which God hath given him. Yet this work is principally ascribed to the Holy Ghost, and so we are said to be “ born of the Spirit.”

So then regeneration is a work of God : “ We are born, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” John, 1 : 13. If ever thou wouldst be savingly converted, thou must despair of doing it in thine own strength. It is a resurrection from the dead, Eph. 2 : 1, a new creation, Gal. 6 : 15 ; Eph. 2 : 10, a work of absolute omnipotence, Eph. 1 : 19. If thou hast no more than thou hadst by thy first birth, a good nature, a meek and chaste temper, &c. thou art a stranger to true conversion ; this is a supernatural work.

2. The *causes* are efficient and meritorious. The efficient cause is only free grace. “ Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but of his mercy he saved us,” and “ by the renewing of the Holy Ghost.” “ Of his own will begat he us.”

God finds nothing in man to excite his complacency. Look back upon thyself, O Christian ! Do not thine own clothes abhor thee ? Job, 9 : 31. How then should holiness and pureness love thee ? Be astonished, O heavens, at this ; be moved, O earth. Who but must needs cry, grace ! grace ! Hear and blush, ye children of the Most High—O ye unthankful generation ! that free grace is no more in your mouths, in your thoughts ; no more adored, admired, and commended by such as you ! One would think you should be doing nothing but praising and admiring God wherever you are.

How can you forget such grace, or pass it over with a slight and formal mention? What but free grace could move God to love you, unless enmity could do it, unless deformity could do it? How affectionately doth Peter lift up his hands! "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, who of his abundant mercy hath begotten us again." How feelingly doth Paul magnify the free mercy of God in it! "God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he has loved us, hath quickened us together with Christ. By grace ye are saved."

The meritorious cause is the mediation and intercession of the blessed Jesus. He hath obtained gifts for the rebellious, and through him it is that God worketh in us what is well pleasing in his sight. Through him are all spiritual blessings bestowed upon us in heavenly things. Every convert is the fruit of his travail. He is made sanctification to us. He sanctified himself, (that is, set apart himself as a sacrifice,) that we may be sanctified.

It is nothing then beyond his own love, but the merit and intercession of Christ, that prevails with God to bestow on us converting grace. If thou art a new creature, thou knowest to whom thou owest it; to Christ's agonies and prayers. And whither else shouldst thou go? If any in the world can show that for thy heart which Christ can, let them do it. Doth Satan claim thee? Doth the world court thee? Doth sin sue for thy heart? Why? were these crucified for thee? O Christian, love and serve the Lord whilst thou hast a being.

3. The instrument is either personal or real. The *personal* is the ministry. I have begotten you in Christ through the Gospel. Christ's ministers are they that

are sent to open men's eyes, and to turn them to God. Acts, 26 : 18.

O unthankful world, little do you know what you are doing while you are slighting the messengers of the Lord! These are they whose business it is (under Christ) to save you. Whom have you reproached and blasphemed? Against whom have you exalted your voice, and lifted your eyes on high? "These are the servants of the most high God, that show unto you the way of salvation," and do you thus requite them, O foolish and unwise! O sons of ingratitude! against whom do ye sport yourselves! These are the instruments that God uses to convert and save sinners: and do you revile your physicians, and throw your pilots overboard? "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

The *real* instrument is the word. We are begotten by the word of truth. This it is that enlightens the eye; that converts the soul, Psalm 19 : 7, 8; that maketh wise to salvation. 2 Tim. 3 : 15. This is the incorruptible seed, by which we are born again. 1 Pet. 1 : 23. If we are washed, it is by the word. Eph. 5 : 26. If we are sanctified, it is through the truth. John, 17 : 17.

O ye saints, how should ye love the word! for by this you have been converted: O ye sinners, how should you ply the word! for by means of this you must be converted. You that have felt its renewing power, make much of it while you live; be for ever thankful for it; tie it about your neck; write it upon your hand; lay it in your bosom. When you go, let it lead you; when you sleep, let it keep you; when you wake, let it talk with you: say with holy David, "I will never forget thy precepts, for by them thou hast

quicken me." You that are unconverted, read the word with diligence; flock to it where powerfully preached: pray for the coming of the Spirit in the word; come from your knees to the sermon, and come to your knees from the sermon. The seed doth not prosper, because not watered by prayers and tears, nor covered by meditation.

4. The final cause is *man's salvation, and God's glory*. We are chosen through sanctification to salvation; called that we might be glorified; but especially that God might be glorified, that we should "show forth his praise," and "be fruitful in good works." O Christian! do not forget the end of thy calling; "let thy light shine," let thy lamp burn; let thy fruits be good, and many, and in season; let all thy designs fall in with God's, that he may "be magnified in thee."

5. The subject is the *sinner*, and that in all his parts and powers, *members and mind*. Thou beginnest at the wrong end, if thou disputest first about thine election. Prove thy conversion, and then never doubt of thy election: or, canst thou not yet prove it? set upon a present and thorough turning. Whatever God's purposes be, (which are secret,) I am sure his precepts are plain. How desperately do rebels argue! if I am elected I shall be saved, do what I will; if not, I shall be damned, do what I can. Perverse sinner! wilt thou begin where thou shouldest end? Is not the word before thee? What saith it? "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." "If you mortify the deeds of the body you shall live." "Believe and be saved." What can be plainer? Do not stand still disputing about thine election, but set to repenting and believing; cry to God for converting grace. Revealed things belong to thee; in these busy thyself. It is just

(as one well said) that they who will not feed on the plain food of the word should be choked with the bones. Whatever God's purposes be, I am sure his promises are true; whatever the decrees of heaven be I am sure that if I repent and believe, I shall be saved; and that if I repent not, I shall be damned. Is not here plain ground for thee? and wilt thou yet run upon the rocks?

More particularly, this change of conversion passes throughout the whole man. A carnal person may have some shreds of good morality, but he is never good throughout the whole body of holiness and Christianity. Conversion is not repairing of the old building; but it takes all down, and erects a new structure. It is not the putting in a patch of holiness; but with the true convert holiness is woven into all his powers, principles, and practice. The sincere Christian is quite a new fabric, from the foundation to the top-stone. He is a new man, a new creature. All things are become new. Conversion is a deep work, a heart-work. It goes throughout with men, throughout the mind, throughout the members, throughout the motions of the whole life.

I. Throughout the mind. It makes a universal change within.

I. It turns the balance of the judgment; so that God and his glory do weigh down all carnal and worldly interests. It opens the eye of the mind, and makes the scales of its native ignorance to fall off, and turns men from darkness to light. The man that before saw no danger in his condition, now concludes himself lost, and for ever undone, except renewed by the power of

grace. He that formerly thought there was little hurt in sin, now comes to see it to be the chief of evils; he sees the unreasonableness, the unrighteousness, the deformity and filthiness of sin; so that he is affrighted with it, loathes it, dreads it, flees from it, and even abhors himself for it. He that could see little sin in himself, and could find no matter for confession, now sees the rottenness of his heart, the desperate and deep pollution of his whole nature; he cries, Unclean, unclean: Lord, purge me with hyssop, wash me thoroughly, create in me a clean heart. He sees himself altogether filthy, corrupt, both root and tree; he writes unclean upon all his parts, and powers, and performances; he discovers the filthy corners that he was never aware of, and sees the blasphemy, and theft, and murder, and adultery, that is in his heart, which before he was ignorant of.

Heretofore he saw no form nor comeliness in Christ, nor beauty, that he should desire him; but now he finds the hidden treasure, and will sell all to buy this field. Christ is the pearl he seeks.

Now, according to this new light, the man is of another mind, another judgment, than he was before. Now God is all with him, he hath none in heaven, nor in earth like him; he prefers him truly before all the world; his favor is his life, the light of his countenance is more than corn, or wine, and oil. A hypocrite may come to yield a general assent to this, that God is the chief good; yea, the wiser heathens (some few of them) have at last stumbled upon this: but there is a difference between the absolute and comparative judgment of the understanding. No hypocrite comes so far as to look upon God as the most desirable and suitable good to him, and thereupon to acquiesce

in him. This is the convert's voice: "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

2. It turns the bias of the will both as to means and end. The intentions of the will are altered. Now the man hath new ends and designs; now he intends God above all, and desires and designs nothing in all the world so much as that Christ may be magnified in him. He counts himself more happy in this than in all that the earth could yield, that he may be serviceable to Christ, and bring him glory. This is the mark he aims at, that the name of Jesus may be great in the world.

Reader, dost thou view this, and never ask thyself whether it be thus with thee? Pause a while, and breathe on this great concernment.

The choice is also changed. He pitcheth upon God as his blessedness, and upon Christ and holiness as means to bring him to God. He chooseth Jesus for his Lord. He is not merely forced to Christ by the storm, nor doth he take Christ for bare necessity, but he comes freely; he deliberately resolves that Christ is his best choice, and would rather have him than all the good of this world, might he enjoy it while he would. Again, he takes holiness for his path; he does not of mere necessity submit to it, but he likes and loves it: "*I have chosen the way of thy precepts.*" He takes God's testimonies, not as his bondage, but as his heritage; yea, heritage for ever. He counts them not his burden, but his bliss; not his cords, but his cordials. He does not only bear, but takes up Christ's yoke: he takes not holiness as the stomach does the

loathed potion, (which a man will take rather than die,) but as the hungry doth his beloved food. No time passeth so sweetly with him (when he is himself) as that he spends in the exercises of holiness. These are both his aliment and element, the desire of his eyes and the joy of his heart. Put thy conscience to it as thou goest, whether thou art the man. O happy man, if this be thy case! But see thou be impartial in the decision.

3. It turns the bent of the affections. These run all in a new channel. Christ is his hope. This is his prize. Here his eye is: here his heart. He is contented to cast all overboard, (as the merchant in the storm ready to perish,) so he may but keep this jewel.

The first of his desires is not after gold, but grace. He hungers after it, he seeks it as silver, he digs for it as for hid treasure; he had rather be gracious than be great; he had rather be the holiest man on earth than the most learned, the most famous, the most prosperous. While carnal, he said, O if I were but in great esteem, rolling in wealth, and swimming in pleasure: if my debts were paid, and I and mine provided for, then I were a happy man! but now the tone is changed. O! saith the convert, if I had but my corruptions subdued, if I had such measures of grace, such fellowship with God, though I were poor and despised I should not care, I should account myself a blessed man. Reader, is this the language of thy soul?

His *joys* are changed. He rejoiceth in the ways of God's testimonies as much as in all riches. He delights in the law of the Lord, wherein once he had little savor. He hath no such joy as in the thoughts of Christ, the fruition of his company, the prosperity of his people.

His *cares* are quite altered. He was once set for the world; now his cry is, "What shall I do to be saved?" His great solicitude is to secure his soul. O how would he bless you if you could but put him out of doubt of this!

His fears, however, are not so much of suffering as of sinning. Once he was afraid of nothing so much as the loss of his estate or reputation; nothing sounded so terrible to him as pain, or poverty, or disgrace; now these are little to him, in comparison of God's dishonor or displeasure. How warily doth he walk, lest he should tread upon a snare! He feareth alway; he hath his eye upon his heart, and is ever watchful lest he should be overtaken with sin. No thought in the world would pain him so much as to think of parting with Christ.

His *love* runs a new course. My love was crucified, (saith Ignatius,) that is, my Christ. This is my beloved, saith the spouse. Cant. 5:16.

How doth Augustine often pour his love upon Christ! O "eternal blessedness!" &c. He can find no words sweet enough. "Let me see thee, O light of mine eyes. Come, O thou joy of my spirit. Let me behold thee, O life of my soul. Appear unto me, O my great delight, my sweet comfort: O my God, my life, and the whole glory of my soul. Let me find thee, O desire of my heart. Let me hold thee, O love of my soul. Let me embrace thee, O heavenly bridegroom. Let me possess thee!"

His *sorrows* have now a new vent. The view of his sins, the sight of Christ crucified, that could scarcely stir him before, now how much do they affect his heart!

His hatred boils, his anger burns against sin. He hath no patience with himself: he calls himself fool

and beast, and thinks any name too good for himself, when his indignation is stirred up against sin. Psalm 73:22. Prov. 30:2. He could once delight in it with much pleasure; now he loathes the thought of returning to it.

Commune then with thine own heart, and attend the general current of thine affections, whether they be toward God in Christ above all other concernments. Indeed, sudden and strong motions of the affections are oft-times found in hypocrites, especially where the natural temperament is warm. And, contrariwise, the sanctified themselves are many times without sensible stirring of the affections, where the temper is more slow, dry, and dull. The great inquiry is, whether the judgment and will be steadily determined for God above all other good, real or apparent; if so, and if the affections do sincerely follow their choice and conduct, though it be not so strongly and sensibly as is to be desired, there is no doubt but the change is saving.

II. Throughout the members. Those that were before the instruments of sin, are now become the holy utensils of Christ's living kingdom. He that before dishonored his body, now possesses his vessel in sanctification and honor, in temperance, chastity, and sobriety, and dedicates it to the Lord.

The *eye* that was once a wandering eye, a wanton eye, a haughty, a covetous eye, is now employed (as Mary's) in weeping over its sins, in beholding God in his works, in reading his word, or in looking for objects of mercy and opportunities for his service.

The *ear* that was once open to Satan's call, is now open to the voice of Christ's house, and to his discipline. It saith. "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

It waits for his words as the rain, and relishes them more than the appointed food, "more than the honey and the honey-comb."

The *head* that was the shop of worldly designs, is now filled with other matters, and set on the study of God's will, and the man employs his head not so much about his gain as about his duty. The thoughts and cares that fill his head are, principally, how he may please God and flee sin.

His *heart* that was filled with filthy lusts, is now become an altar of incense, where the fire of divine love is ever kept burning, and whence the daily sacrifices of prayer and praise, and the sweet incense of holy desires, ejaculations, and prayers, are continually ascending.

The *mouth* is become a well of life, his tongue as choice silver, and his lips feed many; now the salt of grace has seasoned his speech, has eaten out the corruption, Col. 4 : 6, and cleansed the mouth from its filthy communication, flattery, boasting, and backbiting, that once came like flashes that proceeded from the hell that was in the heart. The *throat*, that was once an open sepulchre, now sends forth the sweet breath of prayer and holy discourses, and the man speaks in another tongue, even the language of Canaan, and is never so well as when talking of God and Christ, and the matters of another world. His mouth bringeth wisdom; his tongue is become the silver trumpet of his Maker's praise, his glory, and the best member that he hath.

Now here you will find the hypocrite sadly deficient. He speaks (it may be) like an angel, but he hath a covetous eye, or the gain of unrighteousness in his hand; or the hand is white, but his heart is full of rottenness, Matt. 23 : 27, full of unmortified cares, a very oven of

lust, a shop of pride, the seat of malice. It may be, with Nebuchadnezzar's image, he hath a golden head, a great deal of knowledge; but he hath feet of clay, his affections are worldly, he minds earthly things, and his way and walk are sensual and carnal.

III. Throughout the life and practice, the new man takes a new course. His "conversation is in heaven." No sooner doth Christ call by effectual grace, but he straightway becomes a "follower of him." When God hath given the new heart, and written his law in his mind, he forthwith walks in his statutes, and keeps his judgments.

Though sin may dwell (truly a wearisome and unwelcome guest) in him, yet it hath "no more dominion over him." "He hath his fruit unto holiness," and though he makes many a blot, yet the law of life and Jesus is what he looks at as his copy, and he hath an unfeigned respect to all God's commandments, making conscience even of every duty. His very infirmities, which he cannot help though he would, are his soul's burden, and are like the dust in a man's eye, which though but little, yet is not a little troublesome. (O man! dost thou read this and never turn in upon thy soul by self-examination?) The sincere convert is not one man at the place of worship and another at home; he is not a saint on his knees, and a cheat in his shop; he will not tithe mint and cummin, and neglect mercy and judgment, and the weighty matters of the law; he doth not pretend to piety and neglect morality; but he turns from all his sins, and keeps all God's statutes, though not perfectly, (except in desire and endeavor,) yet sincerely; not allowing himself in the breach of any. Now he delights in 'the word and

sets himself to prayer, and opens his hand and draws out his soul to the hungry. "He breaketh off his sins by righteousness, and his iniquities by showing mercy to the poor," and hath "a good conscience, willing in all things to live honestly," and to keep it without offence toward God and man.

Here again you find the unsoundness of many professors who consider themselves good Christians; they are partial in the law, and take up with the cheap and easy duties of religion, but go not through with the work. It may be you find them exact in their words, punctual in their dealings, but then they do not exercise themselves unto godliness; and as for examining themselves and governing their hearts, to this they are strangers. You may see them duly at the church; but follow them to their families, and there you shall see little but the world minded; or if they have family duties, follow them to their closets, and there you shall find their souls are little looked after. It may be they seem otherwise religious, but bridle not their tongues, and so "all their religion is vain." It may be they come up to closet and family prayer; but follow them to their shops, and there you find them in the habit of lying, or some covert and fashionable way of deceit. Thus the hypocrite goes not throughout in the course of his obedience.

The objects from which we turn in conversion are, sin, Satan, the world, and our own righteousness.

1. Sin. When a man is converted, he is for ever at enmity with sin; yea, with all sin, but most of all with his own sins, and especially with his bosom sin. Sin is now the object of his indignation. His sins swell his

sorrows. It is sin that pierces him and wounds him ; he feels it like a thorn in his side, like a prick in his eyes : he groans and struggles under it, and not formally, but feelingly cries out, " O wretched man ! " He is not impatient of any burden so much as of his sin. If God should give him his choice, he would choose any affliction so he might be rid of sin ; he feels it like the cutting gravel in his shoes, pricking and paining him as he goes.

Before conversion, he had light thoughts of sin ; he cherished it in his bosom, as Uriah his lamb ; he nourished it up, and it grew up together with him ; it did eat, as it were, of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was to him as a daughter. But when God opens his eyes by conversion, he throws it away with abhorrence, as a man would a loathsome toad, which in the dark he had hugged fast in his bosom, and thought it had been some pretty and harmless bird. When a man is savingly changed, he is deeply convinced not only of the danger but the defilement of sin : and O how earnest is he with God to be purified ! he loathes himself for his sins. He runs to Christ, and casts himself into the fountain set open for sin and for uncleanness. If he fall, he has no rest till he flees to the word, and washes in the infinite fountain, laboring to cleanse himself from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit : he abhors his once beloved sin, as a cleanly nature doth the mire wherein he sees the swine delight.

The sound convert is heartily engaged against sin ; he struggles with it, he wars against it ; he is too often foiled, but he will never yield the cause, nor lay down the weapons, while he hath breath in his body ; he will make no peace ; he will give no quarter. He can for-

give his other enemies; he can pity them, and pray for them; but here he is implacable, here he is set upon extermination; he hunteth as it were for the precious life; his eyes shall not pity, his hand shall not spare, though it be a right hand or a right eye. Be it a gainful sin, most delightful to his nature or the support of his esteem with worldly friends, yet he will rather throw his gain down the kennel, see his credit fall, or the flower of pleasure wither in his hand, than he will allow himself in any known way of sin. He will grant no indulgence, he will give no toleration; he draws upon sin wherever he meets it, and frowns upon it with this unwelcome salute, "Have I found thee, O mine enemy?"

Reader, hath conscience been at work while thou hast been looking over these lines? Hast thou pondered these things in thy heart? Hast thou searched the book within, to see if these things be so? If not, read it again, and make thy conscience speak, whether or not it be thus with thee.

Hast thou crucified thy flesh with its affections and lusts? and not only confessed, but forsaken thy sins, all sin in thy fervent desires, and the ordinary practice of every deliberate and wilful sin in thy life? If not, thou art yet unconverted. Doth not conscience fly in thy face as thou readest, and tell thee that thou livest in a way of lying for thy advantage; that thou usest deceit in thy calling; that there is some way of secret wantonness that thou livest in? why then, do not deceive thyself; thou art in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.

Doth not thy unbridled tongue, thy indulgence of appetite, thy wicked company, thy neglect of prayer, of reading and hearing the word, now witness against

thee, and say, "We are thy works, and we will follow thee?" Or, if I have not hit thee right, doth not the monitor within tell thee, there is such or such a way that thou knowest to be evil, that yet for some carnal respect thou dost tolerate thyself in? If this be thy case, thou art to this day unregenerate, and must be changed or condemned.

2. Satan. Conversion binds the strong man, spoils his armor, casts out his goods, turns men from the power of Satan unto God. Before, the devil could no sooner hold up his finger to the sinner to call him to his wicked company, sinful games, and filthy delights, but presently he followed, like an ox to the slaughter, and a fool to the correction of the stocks; as the bird that hasteth to the prey, and knoweth not that it is for his life. No sooner could Satan bid him lie, but presently he had it on his tongue. No sooner could Satan offer a wanton object, but he was stung with lust. If the devil says, "Away with these family duties," be sure they shall be rarely enough performed in his house. If the devil says, "Away with this strictness, this preciseness," he will keep far enough from it: if he tells him, "There is no need of these closet-duties," he shall go from day to day and scarcely perform them. But since he is converted he serves another Master, and takes quite another course: he goes and comes at Christ's bidding. Satan may sometimes catch his foot in a trap, but he will no longer be a willing captive; he watches against the snares and baits of Satan, and studies to be acquainted with his devices; he is very suspicious of his plots, and is very jealous in what comes across him, lest Satan should have some design upon him; he "wrestles against principalities and powers;" he entertains the messenger of Satan

as men do the messenger of death; he keeps his eye upon his enemy, and watches in his duties, lest Satan should put in his foot.

3. The World. Before a man has lively faith, he is overcome of the world; either he bows down to mammon, or idolizes his reputation, or is a "lover of pleasure more than a lover of God." Here is the root of man's misery by the fall; he is turned aside to the creature, and gives that esteem, confidence, and affection to the creature, that is due to God alone.

O miserable man, what a deformed monster hath sin made thee! God made thee "little lower than the angels;" sin, little better than the devils; a monster that hath his head and heart where his feet should be. The world that was formed to serve thee, is come to rule thee,—the deceitful harlot hath bewitched thee with her enchantments, and made thee bow down and serve her.

But converting grace sets all in order again, and puts God on the throne, and the world at his footstool; Christ in the heart, and the world under the feet. So Paul, "I am crucified to the world, and the world to me." Before this change, all the cry was, "Who will show us any worldly good?" but now he prays, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me," and take the corn and wine whoso will. Before, his heart's delight and content were in the world; then the song was, "Soul, take thy ease, eat, drink, and be merry; thou hast much goods laid up for many years;" but now all this is withered, and there is no comeliness, that we should desire it; and he tunes up with the sweet Psalmist of Israel: "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance; the lines are fallen to me in a fair place, and I have a goodly heritage." He blesseth him-

self, and boasteth himself in God. Nothing else can give him content. He hath written vanity and vexation upon all his worldly enjoyments, and loss and dung upon all human excellencies. He hath life and immortality now in pursuit. He pants for grace and glory, and hath a crown incorruptible in view. His heart is set in him to seek the Lord. He first seeks the kingdom of heaven and the righteousness thereof, and religion is no longer a matter by-the-by with him, but his main care.

Before, the world had the sway with him; he would do more for gain than godliness, more to please his friend, or his flesh, than the God that made him; and God must stand by till the world was first served. But now all must stand by; he hates father and mother, and life, and all, in comparison of Christ. Well then, pause a little, and look within. Doth not this nearly concern thee? Thou pretendest for Christ, but does not the world sway thee? Dost thou not take more real delight and content in the world than in him? Dost thou not find thyself better at ease when the world goes to thy mind, and thou art compassed with carnal delights, than when retired to prayer and meditation in thy closet, or attending upon God's word and worship? No surer evidence of an unconverted state, than to have the things of the world uppermost in our aim, love, and estimation.

With the sound convert, Christ has the supremacy. How dear is his name to him! How precious is his favor! The name of Jesus is engraven on his heart, Gal. 4: 19, and lies as a bundle of myrrh between his breasts. Cant. 1: 13, 14. Honor is but air, and laughter is but madness, and mammon is fallen like dagon before the ark, with hands and head broken off on the

threshold, when once Christ is savingly revealed. Here is the pearl of great price to the true convert; here is his treasure, here is his hope. This is his glory; my beloved is mine, and I am his. O! it is sweeter to him to be able to say, Christ is mine, than if he could say, the kingdom is mine, the Indies are mine.

4. Our own righteousness. Before conversion, man seeks to cover himself with his own fig-leaves, and to make himself whole with his own duties. He is apt to trust in himself, and set up his own righteousness, and to reckon his counters for gold, and not submit to the righteousness of God. But conversion changes his mind; now he casts away his filthy rags, and counts his own righteousness as a filthy cloth. He casts it off, as a man would the dirty tatters of a beggar. Now he is brought to poverty of spirit, complains of and condemns himself, and all his inventory is, "poor, and miserable, and wretched, and blind, and naked." He sees a world of iniquity in his holy things, and calls his once idolized righteousness but filth and loss; and would not for a thousand worlds be found in it. Now he begins to set a high price upon Christ's righteousness: he sees the need of Christ in every duty, to justify his person, and sanctify his performances; he cannot live without him; he cannot pray without him. Christ must go with him, or else he cannot come into the presence of God; he leans upon Christ, and so bows himself in the house of his God; he sets himself down for a lost undone man without him; his life is hid in Christ, as the root of a tree spreads in the earth for stability and nutriment. Before, the news of Christ was a stale and tasteless thing, but now how sweet is Christ! Augustine could not relish his before so much admired Cicero, because he could not find in

his writing the name of Christ! How emphatically cries he, "O most sweet, most loving, most kind, most dear, most precious, most desired, most lovely, most fair!" &c. *Meditat. c. 37*, all in a breath, when he speaks of and to his Christ. In a word, the voice of the convert is with the martyr, "None but Christ."

The ultimate end to which we turn in conversion is, God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; whom the true convert takes as his all-sufficient and eternal blessedness. A man is never truly sanctified till his very heart be in truth set upon God above all things, as his portion and chief good. These are the natural breathings of a believer's heart: "Thou art my portion." "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord." "My expectation is from him; he only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; in God is my salvation and glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge is in God."

Would you put it to an issue, whether you be converted or not? Now let thy soul and all that is within thee attend.

Hast thou taken God for thy happiness? Where doth the content of thy heart lie? Whence doth thy choicest comfort come in? Come then, and with Abraham lift up thine eyes eastward, and westward, and northward, and southward, and cast about thee, what is it that thou wouldst have in heaven or on earth to make thee happy? If God should give thee thy choice, as he did to Solomon, or should say to thee, as Ahasuerus to Esther, "What is thy petition, and what is thy request, and it shall be granted thee?" what wouldst thou ask? Go into the gardens of pleasure, and gather all the fragrant flowers thence: would these content thee? Go

to the treasures of Mammon; suppose thou mightest lade thyself as thou wouldst from hence. Go to the towers, to the trophies of honor; what thinkest thou of being a man of renown, and having a name like the name of the great men of the earth? Would any of this, all this suffice thee, and make thee count thyself happy? If so, then certainly thou art carnal and unconverted. If not, go farther; wade into the divine excellences, the store of his mercies, the hiding of his power, the depths unfathomable of his all-sufficiency. Doth this suit thee best and please thee most? Dost thou say, "It is good to be here"—"Here will I pitch, here will I live and die?" Wilt thou let all the world go rather than this? Then it is well between God and thee: happy art thou, O man—happy art thou that ever thou wast born. If a God can make thee happy, thou must be happy; for thou hast avouched the Lord to be thy God. Dost thou say to Christ as he to us, "Thy Father shall be my Father, and thy God my God?" Here is the turning point; an unsound professor never takes up his rest in God, but converting grace does the work, and so cures the fatal misery of the fall, by turning the heart from its idol to the living God. Now, says the soul, "Lord, whither shall I go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Here he centres, here he settles. It is the entrance of heaven to him; he sees his interest in God. When he discovers this, he saith, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." And he is even ready to breathe out Simeon's song, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace;" and saith with Jacob, when his old heart revived at the welcome tidings, "It is enough." When he sees he hath a God in covenant to go to, "this is all his salvation and all his desire."

Is this thy case? hast thou experienced this? Why then, "blessed art thou of the Lord;" God hath been at work with thee; he hath laid hold on thy heart by the power of converting grace, or else thou couldst never have done this.

God effects this work through Christ, the only Mediator between God and man. 1 Tim. 2 : 5. His work is to bring us to God. 1 Pet. 3 : 18. He is the way to the Father, John, 14 : 6, the only plank on which we may escape, the only door by which we may enter. John, 10 : 9. Conversion brings over the soul to Christ to accept him as the only means of life, as the only way, the only name given under heaven. He looks not for salvation in any other but him; he throws himself on Christ alone, as one that would cast himself with spread arms upon the sea.

"Here (saith the convinced sinner) I will venture; and if I perish, I perish; if I die, I will die here. But, Lord, suffer me not to perish under the eye of thy mercy. Entreat me not to leave thee, or to turn away from following after thee." Ruth, 1 : 16. "Here I will throw myself, if thou kill me." "I will not go from thy door."

Thus the poor soul doth venture on Christ and resolutely adhere to him. Before conversion, the man made light of Christ, minded his farm, friends, merchandise, more than Christ; now Christ is to him as his necessary food, his daily bread, the life of his heart, the staff of his life. His great desire is, that Christ may be magnified in him. His heart once said, as they to the spouse, "What is thy beloved more than another?" Cant. 5 : 9. He found more sweetness in his merry company, wicked games, earthly delights, than in Christ. He took religion for a fancy, and the talk

of great enjoyments for an idle dream ; but now to him to live is Christ. He sets light by all that he accounted precious, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ

All of Christ is accepted by the sincere convert : he loves not only the wages but the work of Christ ; not only the benefits but the burden of Christ ; he is willing not only to tread out the corn, but to draw under the yoke ; he takes up the commands of Christ, yea, and cross of Christ.

The unsound closeth by halves with Christ ; he is all for the salvation of Christ, but he is not for sanctification ; he divides the offices and benefits of Christ. This is an error in the foundation. Whoso loveth life, let him beware here ; it is an undoing mistake, of which you have been often warned, and yet none more common. Jesus is a sweet name ; but men “ love not the Lord Jesus in sincerity.” They will not have him as God offers, “ to be a Prince and a Savior.” They divide what God has joined, the king and the priest : yea, they will not accept the salvation of Christ as he intends it ; they divide it here. Every man’s vote is for salvation from suffering ; but they desire not to be saved from sinning ; they would have their lives saved, but withal would have their lusts. Yea, many divide here again ; they would be content to have some of their sins destroyed, but they cannot leave the lap of Delilah, or divorce the beloved Herodias : they cannot be cruel to the right eye or right hand : the Lord must pardon them in this thing. O be carefully scrupulous here : your souls depend upon it. The sound convert takes a whole Christ, and takes him for all intents and purposes, without exceptions, without limitations, without reserve. He is willing to have Christ upon any terms ; he is willing to have the dominion of Christ, as well as

deliverance by Christ; he saith, with Paul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Any thing, Lord. He sends the blank to Christ, to set down his own conditions.

The heart that was once set against the laws, ordinances, and ways of Christ, and could not endure the strictness of these bonds, the severity of these ways, now falls in with them, and chooses them as its rule and guide for ever.

Four things, I observe, God doth work in every sound convert, with reference to the laws and ways of Christ; by which you may come to know your state, if you will be faithful to your own souls, and therefore keep your eyes upon your hearts as you go along.

1. The judgment is brought to approve of them, and subscribe to them, as most righteous and most reasonable. The mind is brought to like the ways of God; and the corrupt prejudices that were once against them, as unreasonable and intolerable, are now removed. The understanding assents to them all, as holy, just, and good. Rom. 7 : 12. How is David taken up with the excellences of God's laws! how doth he expatiate on their praises, both from their inherent qualities and admirable effects! Psalm 19 : 8, 9, 10, &c.

There is a twofold judgment of the understanding. The absolute judgment is, when a man thinks such a course best in the general, but not for him, or not under his present circumstances. Now, a godly man's judgment is for the ways of God, and that not only the absolute, but comparative judgment; he thinks them not only the best in general, but best for him: he looks upon the rules of religion not only as tolerable, but de-

sirable; yea, more desirable than gold, fine gold; yea, much fine gold.

His judgment is fully determined that it is best to be holy, that it is best to be strict, that it is in itself the most eligible course, and that it is for him the wisest and most rational and desirable choice. Hear the godly man's judgment: "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right; I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold; I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way." Mark, he approves of all that God requires, and disallows of all that he forbids. "Righteous, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments. Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful. Thy word is true from the beginning, and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever." See how readily and fully he subscribes; he declares his assent and consent to it, and all and every thing therein contained.

2. The desire of the heart is to know the whole mind of Christ. He would not have one sin undiscovered, nor be ignorant of one duty required. It is the natural and earnest breathing of a sanctified heart: "Lord, if there be any way of wickedness in me, do thou discover it. What I know not, teach thou me: and if I have done iniquity, I will do it no more." The unsound is willingly ignorant, loves not to come to the light. He is willing to keep such or such a sin, and therefore is loth to know it to be a sin, and will not let in the light at that window. Now the gracious heart is willing to know the whole latitude and compass of his Maker's law. He receives with all acceptance the word which convinceth him of any duty that he knew not, or minded not before, or which discovereth any sin that lay hid before.

3. The free and decided choice of the will is for the ways of Christ, before all the pleasures of sin and prosperities of the world. His consent is not extorted by some extremity of anguish, nor is it only a sudden and hasty resolve, but he is deliberately purposed, and comes off freely to the choice. True, the flesh will rebel, yet the prevailing part of his will is for Christ's laws and government; so that he takes them not up as his toil or burden, but his bliss. While the unsanctified goes in Christ's ways as in chains and fetters, he does it heartily, and counts Christ's laws his liberty. He delights in the beauties of holiness, and has this inseparable mark, "That he had rather (if he might have his choice) live a strict and holy life, than the most prosperous and flourishing mere worldly life." "There went with Saul a band of men whose hearts God had touched." When God toucheth the hearts of his chosen, they presently follow Christ, and (though drawn) do freely run after him, and willingly devote themselves to the service of the Lord, seeking him with their whole desire. Fear hath its use; but this is not the main spring of motion with a sanctified heart. Christ keeps not his subjects by force, but is king of a willing people. They are, through his grace, freely devoted to his service; they serve out of choice, not as slaves, but as the son or spouse, from a spring of love and a loyal mind. In a word, the laws of Christ are the convert's love, delight, and continual study.

4. The bent of his course is directed to keep God's statutes. It is the daily care of his life to walk with God. He seeks great things, he hath noble designs, though he fall too short. He aims at nothing less than perfection: he desires it, he reaches after it; he would not rest in any degree of grace, till he were quite rid of sin, and had perfect holiness.

Here the hypocrite's rottenness may be discovered. He desires holiness (as one well said) only as a bridge to heaven, and inquires earnestly what is the least that will serve his turn; and if he can get but so much as may bring him to heaven; this is all he cares for. But the sound convert desires holiness for holiness' sake, and not merely for heaven's sake. He would not be satisfied with so much as might save him from hell, but desires the highest degree: yet desires are not enough. What is thy way and thy course? Is holiness thy pursuit, and religion thy business? If not, thou art short of sound conversion.

Application.—And is this that we have described, the conversion that is of absolute necessity to salvation? Then be informed, That strait is the gate and narrow the way that leadeth unto life—that there are but few that find it—that there is need of a divine power savingly to convert a sinner to Jesus Christ.

Again, Then be exhorted, O man, to turn in upon thine own self. What saith conscience? Doth it not begin to bite? Doth it not pierce thee as thou goest? Is this thy judgment, and this thy choice, and this thy way, that we have described? If so, then it is well. But doth not thy heart condemn thee, and tell thee there is such a sin thou livest in against thy conscience? Doth it not tell thee there is such an and such a secret way of wickedness that thou makest no account of? such or such a duty that thou makest no conscience of?

Doth not conscience carry thee to thy closet, and tell thee how seldom prayer and reading are performed there? Doth it not carry thee to thy family, and show thee the charge of God, and the souls of thy children and servants, that are neglected there? Doth not conscience lead thee to thy shop, thy trade, and tell thee

of some iniquity there? Doth it not carry thee to the dram-shop, or the resort of idleness, and blame thee for the loose company thou keepest there, the precious time thou misspendest there, for the talents which thou wastest there, for thy gaming, and thy drinking? &c. Doth it not carry thee into thy secret chamber, and read there thy condemnation?

O conscience! do thy duty: in the name of the living God, I command thee, discharge thine office; lay hold upon this sinner, fall upon him, arrest him, apprehend him, undeceive him. What! wilt thou flatter and sooth him while he lives in his sins? Awake, O conscience! what meanest thou, O sleeper? What! hast thou never a reproof in thy mouth? What! shall this soul die in his careless neglect of God and of eternity, and thou altogether hold thy peace? What! shall he go on still in his trespasses, and yet have peace? Oh! rouse up thyself, and do thy work. Now let the preacher in thy bosom speak: cry aloud, and spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet: let not the blood of his soul be required at thy hands.

CHAPTER III.

Of the Necessity of Conversion.

It may be you are ready to say, What meaneth this stir? and are apt to wonder why I follow you with such earnestness, still ringing one lesson in your ears, that "you should repent, and be converted." But I must say to you, as Ruth to Naomi, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee." Were it

a matter of indifference—might you be saved as you are—I would gladly let you alone: but would you not have me solicitous for you, when I see you ready to perish? As the Lord liveth, before whom I am, I have not the least hope to see one of your faces in heaven, except you be converted. I utterly despair of your salvation, except you will be prevailed with to turn thoroughly, and give up yourselves to God in holiness and newness of life. Hath God said, “Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God?” John, 3 : 3; and yet do you wonder why your ministers so earnestly labor for you? Think it not strange that I am earnest with you to follow after holiness, and long to see the image of God upon you. Never did any, nor shall any, enter into heaven by any other way but this. The conversion described is not a high attainment of some eminent Christians, but every soul that is saved passeth this change.

It was a saying of the noble Roman, when he was hasting with corn to the city in the famine, and the mariners were loth to set sail in foul weather, It is necessary for us to sail—it is not necessary for us to live. What is it that thou dost count necessary? Is thy bread necessary? Is thy breath necessary? Then thy conversion is much more necessary. Indeed, this is the one thing necessary. Thine estate is not necessary; thou mayest sell all for the pearl of great price, and yet be a gainer by the purchase. Thy life is not necessary; thou mayest part with it for Christ, to infinite advantage. Thy reputation is not necessary; thou mayest be reproached for the name of Christ, and yet be happy; yea, much more happy in reproach than in repute. But thy conversion is necessary; thy salvation depends upon it; and is it not needful, in so im-

portant a case, to look about thee? On this one point depends thy making or marring to all eternity.

But I shall more particularly show the necessity of conversion in five things; for without this,

I. Thy being is in vain. Is it not a pity thou shouldst be good for nothing, an unprofitable burden of the earth. a wart or wen in the body of the universe? Thus thou art, whilst unconverted; for thou canst not answer the end of thy being. Is it not for the divine pleasure that thou art and wast created? Did not God make thee for himself? Art thou a man, and hast thou reason? Then, bethink thyself why and whence thy being is. Behold God's workmanship in thy body, and ask thyself, to what end did God rear this fabric? Consider the noble faculties of thy heaven-born soul. To what end did God bestow these excellencies. To no other than that thou shouldst please thyself, and gratify thy senses? Did God send men, like the swallows, into the world, only to gather a few sticks and dirt, and build their nests, and breed up their young, and then away? The very heathens could see farther than this. Art thou so "fearfully and wonderfully made," and dost thou not yet think with thyself—surely it was for some noble and exalted end?

O man! set thy reason a little to work. Is it not a pity such a goodly fabric should be raised in vain? Verily thou art in vain, except thou art for God: better thou hadst no being, than not be for him. Wouldst thou serve thy end? thou must repent and be converted: without this, thou art to no purpose; yea, to bad purpose.

Thou art to no purpose. Man, unconverted, is like

a choice instrument that hath every string broken or out of tune. The Spirit of the living God must repair and tune it by the grace of regeneration, and sweetly move it by the power of actuating grace, or else thy prayers will be but howlings, and all thy services will make no music in the ears of the Most Holy. All thy powers and faculties are so corrupt in thy natural state, that, except thou be purged from dead works, thou canst not serve the living God.

An unsanctified man cannot work the work of God. 1. He hath no skill in it; he is altogether as unskilful in the work as in the word of righteousness. There are great mysteries in the practice as well as in the principles of godliness. Now the unregenerate know not "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." You may as well expect him that never learned the alphabet to read, or look for goodly music on the lute from one that never set his hand to an instrument, as that a natural man should do the Lord any pleasing service. He must first be taught of God, taught to pray, taught to profit, taught to go, or else he will be utterly at a loss. 2. He hath no strength for it. How weak is his heart! he is presently tired. The Sabbath, what a weariness is it! He is without strength, yea, dead in sin. 3. He hath no mind to it; he desires not the knowledge of God's ways; he doth not know them, and he doth not care to know them; he knows not, neither will he understand. 4. He hath neither due instruments nor materials for it. A man may as well hew the marble without tools, or paint without colors or instruments, or build without materials, as perform any acceptable service, without the graces of the Spirit, which are both the materials and instruments in the work. Almsgiving is not a service of God, but of vain-glory, if not

held forth by the hand of divine love. What is the prayer of the lips without grace in the heart, but the carcass without the life? What are all our confessions, unless they be exercises of godly sorrow and unfeigned repentance? What our petitions, unless animated with lioly desires and faith in the divine attributes and promises? What our praises and thanksgivings, unless from the love of God, and a holy gratitude and sense of God's mercies in the heart? So that a man may as well expect that trees should speak, or look for logic from the brutes, or motion from the dead, as to look for any service, holy and acceptable to God, from the unconverted. When the tree is evil, how can the fruit be good?

Also, without conversion you live to bad purpose. The unconverted soul is a very cage of unclean birds, a sepulchre full of corruption and rottenness, a loathsome carcass full of worms, and sending forth a most noisome savor to God. O dreadful case! Dost thou not yet see a change to be needful? Would it not have grieved one to have seen the golden consecrated vessels of God's temple turned into quaffing bowls of drunkenness, and polluted with the idol's service? Was it such an abomination to the Jews, when Antiochus set up the picture of a swine at the entrance of the temple? How much more abominable then would it have been to have had the very temple itself turned into a stable or a sty; and to have had the "holy of holies" served like the house of Baal, and have been turned into a draught-house! This is the very case of the unregenerate: all thy members are turned into instruments of unrighteousness, servants of Satan; and thy inmost powers into a receptacle of uncleanness. You may see the guests within, by what comes out;

for, "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies," &c. This black troop discovers what a hell there is within.

O abuse insufferable! to see a heaven-born soul abased to the filthiest drudgery! to see the glory of God's creation, the chief of the works of God, the Lord of the universe, lapping with a prodigal at the trough! Was it such a lamentation to see those that did feed delicately sit desolate in the streets; and the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, esteemed as earthen pitchers; and those that were clothed in scarlet embrace dunghills? And is it not much more fearful to see the only thing that hath immortality in this lower world, and carries the stamp of God, become as a vessel wherein is no pleasure, and be put to the most sordid use? O indignity intolerable! Better thou wert dashed in a thousand pieces, than continue to be abased to so vile a service.

II. Not only man, but the whole visible creation, is in vain without this. God hath made all the visible creatures in heaven and earth for the service of man, and man only is the spokesman for all the rest. Man is, in the universe, like the tongue to the body, which speaks for all the members. The other creatures cannot praise their Maker, but by dumb signs and hints to man that he should speak for them. Man is, as it were, the high-priest of God's creation, to offer the sacrifice of praise for all his fellow creatures. The Lord God expecteth a tribute of praise from all his works. Now, all the rest do bring in their tribute to man, and pay it by his hand. So then, if a man be false, and faithless, and selfish, God is wronged of all, and has no active glory from his works.

O dreadful thought to think of! that God should build such a world as this, and lay out such infinite power, and wisdom, and goodness thereupon, and all in vain; and that man should be guilty, at last, of robbing and spoiling him of the glory of all! O think of this. While thou art unconverted, all the offices of the creatures are in vain to thee: thy meat nourishes thee in vain; the sun holds forth his light to thee in vain; the stars that serve thee in their courses by their powerful, though hidden influence, do it in vain; thy clothes warm thee in vain; thy beast carries thee in vain; in a word, the unwearied labors of the whole creation (as to thee) are in vain. The service of all the creatures that drudge for thee, and yield forth their strength unto thee, that therewith thou shouldest serve their Maker, is all but lost labor. Hence the whole creation groaneth under the abuse of men unsanctified, who pervert all things to the service of their lusts, quite contrary to the very end of their being.

III. Without this, thy religion is vain; all thy religious performances will be but lost; for they can neither please God nor save thy soul, which are the very ends of religion. Be thy services ever so specious, yet God hath no pleasure in them. Is not that man's case dreadful whose sacrifices are as murders, and whose prayers are a breath of abomination? Many, under convictions, think they will set upon mending, and that a few prayers and alms will cover all again; but alas, sirs! while your hearts remain unsanctified your duties will not pass. How punctual was Jehu! and yet all was rejected because his heart was not upright. How blameless was Paul! and yet, being unconverted, all was but loss. Men think they do much

in attending God's service, and are ready to charge him with it, and set him down so much their debtor; whereas their persons being un sanctified, their duties cannot be accepted.

O soul! do not think, when thy sins pursue thee, that a little praying and reforming thy course will pacify God. Thou must begin with thine heart. If that be not renewed, thou canst no more please God than one who, having unspeakably offended thee, should bring thee the most loathsome thing to pacify thee; or having fallen into the mire, should think with his filthy embraces to reconcile thee.

It is a great misery to labor in the fire. The poets could not invent a worse hell for Sisyphus than to be ever toiling to get the barrel up the hill, and then that it should presently roll down again and renew his labor. God threatens it as the greatest of temporal judgments, that they should build and not inhabit, plant and not gather, and that their labors should be eaten up by strangers. Is it so great a misery to lose our common labors, to sow in vain, and to build in vain? how much more to lose our pains in religion—to pray, and hear, and fast in vain! This is an undoing and eternal loss. Be not deceived; if thou goest on in thy sinful state, though thou shouldst spread forth thy hands, God will hide his eyes; though thou make many prayers, he will not hear. If a man without skill set about our work, and spoil it in the doing, though he take much pains, we give him but small thanks. God will be worshipped after the due order. If a servant do our work, but quite contrary to our order, he shall have rather stripes than praise. God's work must be done according to God's mind, or he will not be pleased: and this cannot be, except it be done with a holy heart.

IV. Without this, thy hopes are in vain. "The Lord hath rejected thy confidences."

1. The hope of comfort here is in vain. It is not only necessary to the safety, but comfort, of your condition, that you be converted. Without this, you "shall not know peace." Without the "fear of God" you cannot have the "comfort of the Holy Ghost." God speaks peace only to his people and to his saints. If you have a false peace, continuing in your sins, it is not of God's speaking, and then you may guess the author. Sin is a real sickness, yea, the worst of sickness; it is a leprosy in the head, the plague of the heart; it is rottenness in the bones; it pierceth, it woundeth, it racketh, it tormenteth. A man may as well expect ease when his distempers are in their full strength, or his bones out of joint, as true comfort while in his sins.

O wretched man, that canst have no ease in this case but what comes from the deadliness of the disease! You shall hear the poor sick man saying, in his wildness, he is well, when you see death in his face; he would be up and about his business, when the very next step is likely to be to his grave. The un-sanctified often see nothing amiss; they think themselves whole, and cry not for the physician; but this only shows the danger of their case.

Sin doth naturally breed distempers and disturbances in the soul. What a continual tempest is there in a discontented mind! what a corroding evil is inordinate care! what is passion but a very fever in the mind? what is lust but a fire in the bones? what is pride but a deadly dropsy? or covetousness, but an insatiable and insufferable thirst? or malice and envy, but venom in the very heart? Spiritual sloth is but a scurvy in

the mind, and carnal security a mortal lethargy; and how can that soul have true comfort which is under so many diseases? But converting grace cures, and so eases the mind, and prepares the soul for a settled, standing, immortal peace. "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." They are the ways of wisdom that afford pleasure and peace. David had infinitely more pleasure in the word than in all the delights of his court. The conscience cannot be truly pacified till soundly purified. Cursed is that peace which is maintained in a way of sin. Two sorts of peace are more to be dreaded than all the troubles in the world; peace with sin, and peace in sin.

2. Thy hopes of salvation hereafter are in vain; yea, worse than in vain; they are most injurious to God, most pernicious to thyself. There is death, desperation and blasphemy in this hope. 1. There is death in it. Thy confidence shall be rooted out of thy tabernacles, (God will up with it root and branch;) it shall bring thee to the king of terrors. Though thou mayest lean upon this house, it will not stand, but will prove like a ruinous building, which, when a man trusts to it, falls down about him. 2. There is desperation in it: "Where is the hope of the hypocrite when God takes away his soul?" Then there is an end for ever of his hope. Indeed, the hope of the righteous hath an end; but it is not a destructive, but a perfective end; his hope ends in fruition, others in frustration. The godly may say at death, "It is finished;" but the wicked, "It is perished," and in too sad earnest bemoan himself, as Job, in a mistake, "Where is now my hope? He hath destroyed me; I am gone, and my hope is removed like a tree." "The righteous hath hope in his death." When nature is-dying, his hopes are living; when his

body is languishing, his hopes are flourishing; his hope is a living hope, but others' a dying, a damning, soul-undoing hope: "When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish; and the hope of unjust men perisheth." It shall be cut off and prove like a "spider's web," which he spins out of his own bowels; but then comes death and destroys all, and so there is an eternal end of his confidence wherein he trusted; for "the eyes of the wicked shall fail, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost."

Wicked men are fixed in their carnal hope, and will not be beaten out of it; they hold it fast; they will not let it go: yea, but death will knock off their fingers. Though we cannot undeceive them, death and judgment will. When death strikes his dart through thy liver, it will ruin thy soul and thy hopes together. The unsanctified have hope only in this life, and therefore are "of all men most miserable." When death comes, it lets them out into the amazing gulf of endless desperation. 3. There is blasphemy in it. To hope we shall be saved, though continuing unconverted, is to hope that we shall prove God a liar. He hath told you, that so merciful and pitiful as he is, he will never save you notwithstanding, if you go on in ignorance, or a course of unrighteousness. In a word, he has told you that, whatever you be or do, nothing shall avail you to salvation unless you become new creatures. Now, to say God is merciful, and we hope that he will save us, is in effect to say, "We hope that God will not do as he says." We must not set God's attributes at variance; God has resolved to glorify his mercy, but not to the prejudice of his truth, as the presumptuous sinner will find to his everlasting sorrow.

Object. But we hope in Jesus Christ; we put our

whole trust in God; and therefore doubt not but we shall be saved.

Ans. 1. This is not to hope in Christ, but against Christ. To hope to see the kingdom of God without being born again: to hope to find eternal life in the broad way, is to hope Christ will prove a false prophet. David's plea is, "I hope in thy word." But this hope is against God's word. Show me a word of Christ for thy hope that he will save thee in thine ignorance or profane neglect of his service, and I will never try to shake thy confidence.

2. God doth with abhorrence reject this hope. Those condemned in the prophet, went on in their sins, yet (saith the text) they will lean upon the Lord. Micah, 3: 11. God will not endure to be made a prop to men in their sins. The Lord rejected those presumptuous sinners that went on still in their trespasses and yet would stay themselves upon Israel's God, as a man would shake off the briars that cleave to his garment.

3. If thy hope be any thing worth, it will purify thee from thy sins; but cursed is that hope which cherishes men in their sins.

Object. Would you have us to despair?

Ans. You must despair of ever coming to heaven as you are, that is, while you remain unconverted. You must despair of ever seeing the face of God without holiness; but you must by no means despair of finding mercy upon your thorough repentance and conversion; neither may you despair of attaining to repentance and conversion, if you set about the work immediately.

V. Without this, all that Christ hath done and suffered will be (as to you) in vain; that is, it will no

way avail you to salvation. Many urge this as a sufficient ground for their hopes, that Christ died for sinners; but I must tell you, Christ never died to save impenitent and unconverted sinners, (so continuing.) A great divine was wont, in his private dealings with souls, to ask two questions: 1. What hath Christ done for you? 2. What hath Christ wrought in you? Without the application of the Spirit in regeneration, we can have no saving interest in the benefits of redemption.

I tell you from the Lord, that Christ himself cannot save you if you go on in this state.

First. It were against his trust. The Mediator is the servant of the Father, shows his commission from him, acts in his name, and pleads his command for his justification; and God has committed all things to him, entrusted his own glory and the salvation of the elect with him. Accordingly Christ gives his Father an account of both parts of his trust before he leaves the world. Now Christ would quite cross his Father's glory and his greatest trust, if he should save men in their sins; for this were to overturn all his counsels, and to offer violence to all his attributes.

1. To overturn all his counsels; of which this is the order, that men should be brought through sanctification to salvation. He hath chosen them, that they should be holy. They are elected to pardon and life through sanctification. If thou canst repeal the law of God's immutable counsel, or corrupt him whom the Father hath sealed, to go directly against his commission, then, and not otherwise, mayst thou get to heaven in this condition. To hope that Christ will save thee while unconverted, is to hope that Christ will falsify his trust. He never did, nor ever will save one

soul but whom the Father hath given him in election, and drawn to him in effectual calling. Be assured, Christ will save none in a way contrary to his Father's will.

2. To offer violence to all his attributes.

(1.) To his justice; for the righteousness of God's judgment lies in rendering to all according to their works. Now, should men sow to the flesh, and yet of the Spirit reap everlasting life, where were the glory of divine justice, since it should be given to the wicked according to the work of the righteous?

(2.) To his holiness. If God should not only save sinners, but save them in their sins, his most pure and strict holiness would be exceedingly defaced. The unsanctified are, in the eyes of God's holiness, exceedingly vile and hateful. It would be offering the extremest violence to the infinite purity of the divine nature to have such to dwell with him. "They cannot stand in his judgment: they cannot abide his presence." If holy David would not endure such in his house, no, nor in his sight, can we think God will? Should he take men as they are, from the mire of their filthiness to the glory of heaven, the world would think that God was at no such great distance from sin, nor had any such dislike to it as we are told he hath; they would be ready to conclude that God was altogether such a one as themselves, as some of old wickedly did, from the very forbearance of God.

(3.) To his veracity. For God hath declared from heaven, that "if any shall say he shall have peace, though he should go on in the imagination of his heart, his wrath shall smoke against that man." That "they (only) that confess and forsake their sins shall find mercy." That "they that shall enter into his hill must

be of clean hands and a pure heart." Where were God's truth, if, notwithstanding all this, he should bring men to salvation without conversion? O desperate sinner, that darest to hope that Christ will put the lie upon his Father, and nullify his word to save thee!

(4.) To his wisdom. For this were to throw away the choicest of mercies on them that would not value them, nor were any way suited to them.

They would not value them. The unsanctified sinner puts but little price upon God's great salvation. He sets no more by Christ than the whole by the physician. He prizes not his balm, values not his cure, but tramples upon his blood. Now, would it stand with wisdom to force pardon and life upon those that would return no thanks? Will the all-wise God (when he hath forbidden us to do it) throw his holy things to dogs, and his pearls to swine, that would, as it were, but turn again and rend him? This would make mercy to be despised indeed. Wisdom requires that life be given in a way suitable to God's honor, and that God provide for the securing of his own glory as well as man's felicity. It would be dishonorable to God to bestow his choicest riches on them that have more pleasure in their lusts than in heavenly delights. God would lose the praise and glory of his grace, if he should cast it away upon them that were not only unworthy, but unwilling.

Also, the mercies of God are no way suited to the unconverted. The divine wisdom is seen in suiting things to each other, the means to the end, the object to the faculty, the quality of the gift to the capacity of the receiver. Now, if Christ should bring the unregenerate sinner to heaven, he could take no more felicity there than a beast if you should bring him into a

beautiful room, to the society of learned men; whereas the poor thing had much rather be grazing with his fellow-brutes. Alas! what could an unsanctified creature do in heaven? he could not be contented there, because nothing suits him. The place doth not suit him; he would be quite out of his element, a fish out of water. The company doth not suit him: what communion hath darkness with light? corruption with perfection? filth and rottenness with glory and immortality? The employment doth not suit him; the anthems of heaven fit not his mouth, suit not his ear. Canst thou charm thy beast with music? or wilt thou bring him to thy organ and expect that he should make thee melody, or keep time with the tuneful choir? or, had he skill, he would have no will, and so could find no pleasure in it. Spread thy table with delicacies before a languishing patient, and it will be a very great offence. Alas! if the poor man say of a Sabbath-day, "What a weariness is it!" how miserable would he think it to be engaged in an everlasting Sabbath?

5. To his immutability, or else to his omniscience or omnipotence; for this is enacted in the conclave of heaven, and enrolled in the decrees of the court above, that none but the "pure in heart shall ever see God;" this is laid up with him, and sealed among his treasures. Now, if Christ yet bring any to heaven unconverted, either he must get them in without his Father's knowledge, and then where is his omniscience? or against his will, and then where were his omnipotence? or he must change his will, and then where were his immutability?

Sinner, wilt thou not give up thy vain hope of being saved in this condition? Saith Bildad, "Shall the earth be forsaken for thee? or the rocks be moved out

of their place?" May I not much more reason so with thee? Shall the laws of heaven be reversed for thee? Shall the everlasting foundations be overturned for thee? Shall Christ put out the eye of his Father's omniscience, or shorten the arm of his eternal power for thee? Shall divine justice be violated for thee? or the brightness of his holiness be blemished for thee? O the impossibility, absurdity, blasphemy, that are in such a confidence! To think Christ will ever save thee in this condition, is to make the Savior become a sinner, and do more wrong to infinite Majesty than all the wicked on earth or devils in hell ever did, or ever could do; and yet wilt thou not give up such a blasphemous hope?

Second. Against his word.

We need not say, "Who shall ascend into heaven, to bring down Christ from above? Or, who shall descend into the deep, to bring up Christ from beneath? The word is nigh us." Are you agreed that Christ shall end the controversy? Hear then his own words - "Except ye be converted, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." "You must be born again." "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me." "Repent or perish." One word, one would think, were enough from Christ; but how often and earnestly doth he reiterate it! "Verily, verily, except a man be born again, he shall not see the kingdom of God." Yea, he doth not only assert but prove the necessity of the new birth, namely, from the fleshliness and sinfulness of man from his first birth, by reason of which man is no more fit for heaven than the beast is for the chamber of the king's presence. And wilt thou yet believe thy own presumptuous confidence, directly against Christ's words? He must go quite against the law of his kingdom, rule of his judgment, to save thee in this state.

Third. Against his oath.

He hath lifted up his hand to heaven, he hath sworn that those who remain in unbelief and know not his ways (that is, are ignorant of them, or disobedient to them,) shall not enter into his rest. And wilt thou not yet believe, O sinner, that he is in earnest? Canst thou hope he will be forsworn for thee? The covenant of grace is confirmed by an oath and sealed by blood; but all must be made void, and another way to heaven found out, if thou be saved, living and dying unsanctified. God is come to his last terms with man, and has condescended as far as in honor he could. Men cannot be saved while unconverted, except they could get another covenant made, and the whole frame of the Gospel (which was established for ever with such dreadful solemnities) quite altered. And must not they be distracted, to hope that they shall?

Fourth. Against his honor.

God will so show his love to the sinner, as withal to show his hatred to sin; therefore "he that names the name of Jesus must depart from iniquity and deny all ungodliness; and he that hath hope of life by Christ must "purify himself as he is pure," otherwise Christ would be thought a favorer of sin. The Lord Jesus would have all the world to know, that though he pardons sin, he will not protect it. If holy David say, "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity," Psa. 6:8, and shut the doors against them, Psa. 101:7, shall not such more expect it from Christ's holiness?

Fifth. Against his offices.

"God hath exalted him to be a Prince and a Savior." He would act against both, should he save men in their sins. It is the office of a king to be "a terror to evil doers, and a praise to them that do well." "He is a

minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath on him that doth evil." Now, should Christ favor the ungodly, (so continuing,) and take those to reign with him that would not that he should reign over them, this would be quite against his office; he therefore reigns that he may "put his enemies under his feet." Now, should he lay them in his bosom, he would cross the end of his regal power; it belongs to Christ, as a King, to subdue the hearts and slay the lusts of his chosen. What king would take rebels in open hostility into his court? What were this but to betray life, kingdom, government, and all together? If Christ be a King, he must have honor, homage, subjection. Now, to save men while in their natural enmity, were to obscure his dignity, lose his authority, bring contempt on his government, and sell his dear-bought rights for naught.

Again, as Christ would not be a Prince, so neither a Savior, if he should do this: for his salvation is spiritual. He is called Jesus, because he saves his people from their sins. Matt. 1:21. So that, should he save them in their sins, he would be neither Lord nor Jesus. To save men from the punishment, and not from the power of sin, were to do his work by halves, and be an imperfect Savior. His office as the Deliverer, is "to turn away ungodliness from Jacob." "He is sent to bless men, in turning them from their iniquities." "To make an end of sin." So that he would destroy his own designs, and nullify his offices, to save men abiding in their unconverted state.

Application.—Arise then! What meanest thou, O sleeper? Awake, O secure sinner! lest thou be consumed in thine iniquities: say, as the lepers, "If we sit here, we shall die." Verily, it is not more certain that thou art now out of hell, than that thou shalt

speedily be in it, except thou repent and be converted : there is but this one door for thee to escape by. Arise then, O sluggard, and shake off thine excuses : how long wilt thou slumber, and fold thy hands to sleep ? Wilt thou lie down in the midst of the sea, or sleep on the top of a mast ? There is no remedy, but thou must either turn or burn. There is an unchangeable necessity of the change of thy condition, except thou hast resolved to abide the worst of it, and try it out with the Almighty. If thou lovest thy life, O man, arise and come away. Methinks I see the Lord Jesus laying the merciful hands of a holy violence upon thee ; methinks he acts like the angels to Lot : “ Then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, lest thou be consumed. And, while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, the Lord being merciful unto him ; and they brought him without the city, and said, Escape for thy life, stay not in all the plain ; escape to the mountains, lest thou be consumed.”

O how wilful will thy destruction be if thou shouldst yet harden thyself in thy sinful state ! But none of you can say that you have not had fair warning. Yet methinks I cannot tell how to leave you so. It is not enough for me to have delivered my own soul. What ! shall I go away without my errand ? Will none of you arise and follow me ? Have I been all this while speaking to the wind ? have I been charming the deaf adder, or allaying the restless ocean with argument ? Do I speak to the trees or rocks, or to men ? to the tombs or monuments of the dead, or to a living auditory ? If you be men, and not senseless stocks, stand still and consider whither you are going ; if you have the reason and understanding of men, dare not to run into the flames, and fall into hell with your eyes

open; but bethink yourselves, and set to the work of repentance. What! men, and yet run into the pit, when the very beasts will not be forced in! What! endowed with reason, and yet trifle with death and hell, and the vengeance of the Almighty! Are men herein only distinguished from very brutes, that these, having no foresight, have no care to provide for the things to come; and will you, who are warned, not hasten your escape from eternal torments? O show yourselves men, and let reason prevail with you.

Is it a reasonable thing for you to contend against the Lord your Maker? or "to harden yourselves against his word," Job, 9:4, as though the Strength of Israel would lie? Is it reasonable that an understanding creature should lose, yea, live quite against, the very end of his being, and be as a broken pitcher, only fit for the dunghill? Is it reasonable that the only thing in this world that God hath made capable of knowing his will and bringing him glory, should yet live in ignorance of his Maker, and be unserviceable to his use, yea, should be engaged against him, and resist his Creator? "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth," and let the creatures without sense judge if this be reason, that man, whom God hath "nourished and brought up, should rebel against him?" Judge in your own selves. Is it a reasonable undertaking for briars and thorns to set themselves in battle against the devouring fire? or for the potsherd of the earth to strive with its Maker? You will say, "This is not reason;" or surely the eye of reason is quite put out. And, if this be not reason, then there is no reason that you should continue as you are, but there is all the reason in the world that you should forthwith turn and repent.

What shall I say? I could spend myself in this ar-

gument. O that you would but hearken to me! that you would now set upon a new course! Will you not be made clean? When shall it once be? Wilt thou sit down and consider the forementioned argument, and debate it, whether it be not best to turn? Come, and let us reason together; is it good for thee to be here? Wilt thou sit till the tide come in upon thee? Is it good for thee to try whether God will be as good as his word, and to harden thyself in a conceit that all is well with thee while thou remainest unsanctified?

Alas! for such sinners; must they perish at last by hundreds? What course shall I use with them that I have not tried? "What shall I do for the daughter of my people?" O Lord God, help. Alas! shall I leave them thus? If they will not hear me, yet do thou hear me. O that they may yet live in thy sight! Lord, save them, or else they perish. My heart would melt to see their houses on fire about their ears when they were fast asleep in their beds; and shall not my soul be moved within me to see them falling into endless perdition? Lord, have compassion, and save them out of the burning: put forth thy divine power, and the work will be done; but, as for me, I cannot prevail.

CHAPTER IV.

Showing the Marks of the Unconverted.

While we keep aloof in generals there is little fruit to be expected; it is the hand-fight that does execution. David is not awakened by the prophet's hovering at a distance in parabolical insinuations; he is forced to close with him, and tell him plainly, "Thou art the

man." Few will, in words, deny the necessity of the new birth; but they have a self-deluding confidence that the work is not now to do. And because they know themselves free from that gross hypocrisy which takes up religion merely for a color to deceive others, and for covering wicked designs, they are confident of their sincerity, and suspect not that more close hypocrisy (wherein the greatest danger lies) by which a man deceiveth his own soul. But man's deceitful heart is such a matchless cheat, and self-delusion so reigning and so fatal a disease, that I know not whether be the greater, the difficulty or the necessity of the undeceiving work that I am now upon. Alas for the unconverted! they must be undeceived, or they will be undone. But how shall this be effected?

Help, O all-searching Light, and let thy discerning eye discover the rotten foundation of the self-deceiver; and lead me, O Lord God, as thou didst the prophet, into the chambers of imagery, and dig through the wall of sinners' hearts, and discover the hidden abominations that are lurking out of sight in the dark. O send thy angel before me to open the sundry wards of their hearts, as thou didst before Peter, and make even the iron gates to fly open of their own accord. And as Jonathan no sooner tasted the honey but his eyes were enlightened, so grant, O Lord, that when the poor deceived souls with whom I have to do shall cast their eyes upon these lines, their minds may be illuminated, and their consciences convinced and awakened, that they may see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and be converted, and thou mayest heal them.

This must be premised before we proceed to the discovery, that it is most certain men may have a confident persuasion that their hearts and states are good,

and yet be unsound. Hear the Truth himself, who shows, in Laodicea's case, that men may be wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, and yet not know it: yea, they may be confident they are rich, and increased in grace. Rev. 3 : 17. "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet not washed from their filthiness." Prov. 30 : 12. Who better persuaded of his state than Paul, while he yet remained unconverted? Rom. 7 : 9. So that they are miserably deceived who take a strong confidence for a sufficient evidence. They that have no better proof than barely a strong persuasion that they are converted, are certainly as yet strangers to conversion.

But to come more close. As it was said to the adherents of Antichrist, so here; some of the unconverted carry their marks in their forehead more openly, and some in their hands more covertly. The apostle reckons up some upon whom he writes the sentence of death; as in these dreadful catalogues, which I beseech you to attend to with all diligence. "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extor-

tioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Wo to them that have their name written in this catalogue. Such may know, as certainly as if God had told them from heaven, that they are unsanctified, and under an impossibility of being saved in this condition.

There are then these several sorts that, past all dispute, are unconverted; they carry their marks in their foreheads.

1. The unclean. These are ever reckoned among the goats, and have their names (whoever is left out) in all the forementioned catalogues.

2. The covetous. These are ever branded for idolaters, and the doors of the kingdom are shut against them by name.

3. Drunkards. Not only such as drink away their reason, but withal (yea, above all) such as are too strong for strong drink. The Lord fills his mouth with woes against these, and declares them to have no inheritance in the kingdom of God.

4. Liars. The God that cannot lie has told them that there is no place for them in his kingdom, no entrance into his hill; but their portion is with the father of lies, whose children they are, in the lake of burnings.

5. Swearers. The end of these, without deep and speedy repentance, is swift destruction, and most certain and unavoidable condemnation.

6. Railers and backbiters, that love to take up a reproach against their neighbor, and fling all the dirt they can in his face, or else wound him secretly behind his back.

7. Thieves, extortioners, oppressors, that grind the poor, or over-reach their brethren when they have them at an advantage: these must know that God "is

the avenger of all such." Hear, O ye false and purloining and wasteful servants! hear, O ye deceitful tradesmen, hear your sentence! God will certainly hold his door against you, and turn your treasures of unrighteousness into the treasures of wrath, and make your ill-gotten silver and gold to torment you, like burning metal in your bowels.

8. All that do ordinarily live in the profane neglect of God's worship, that hear not his word, that call not on his name, that restrain prayer before God, that mind not their own nor their families' souls, but "live without God in the world."

9. Those that are frequenters and lovers of vain company. God hath declared, he will be the destroyer of all such, and that they shall never enter into the hill of his rest.

10. Scoffers at religion, that make a scorn of precise walking, and mock at the messengers and diligent servants of the Lord, and at their holy profession, and make themselves merry with the weakness and failings of professors: "Hear, ye despisers," hear your dreadful doom!

Sinner, consider diligently whether thou art not to be found in one of these ranks; for if this be thy case, thou art in the "gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity;" for all these do carry their marks in their foreheads, and are undoubtedly the sons of death. And if so, the Lord pity our poor congregations! O how small a number will remain, when these ten sorts are left out! May God show you your danger, and constrain you to cry, "Lord, have mercy upon us!"

Sirs, what shift do you make to keep up your confidence of your good state, when God from heaven de-

clares against you, and pronounces you in a state of damnation? I would reason with you as God with them, "How canst thou say, I am not polluted? See thy way in the valley; know what thou hast done." Man, is not thy conscience privy to thy tricks of deceit, to thy secret sins, to thy way of lying? Yea, are not thy friends, thy family, thy neighbors, witnesses to thy profane neglect of God's worship, to thy covetous practices, to thy envious and malicious carriage? May they not point at thee as thou goest—'There goes a gaming prodigal; there goes a drunken Nabal, a companion of evil-doers; there goes a railer, or a scoffer, or a loose liver? Beloved, God hath written it as with a sunbeam, in the book by which you must be judged, that these are not the spots of his children, and that none such (except renewed by converting grace) shall ever escape the damnation of hell.

O that such as you would now be persuaded to "repent and turn from all your transgressions, or else iniquity will be your ruin!" Alas! for poor hardened sinners! However, you must know that you have been warned, and that I am clear of your blood; and whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear, I will leave these Scriptures with them, which will prove either as thunder-bolts to awaken them, or as searing-irons to harden them. "God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses." "He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." "Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded, &c. I will laugh at your calamity—when your destruction cometh as a whirlwind!"

And now I imagine many will begin to bless them-

selves, and think all is well, because they are not spotted with these grosser evils; but I must tell you that there is another sort of unsanctified persons, that carry not their marks in their foreheads, but more secretly and covertly! These do frequently deceive themselves and others, and pass for good Christians, when they are all the while unsound at the foundation. Many pass undiscovered, till death and judgment bring all to light. Those self-deceivers seem to come even to heaven's gate with confidence of their admission, and yet are turned off at last. I beseech you deeply to lay to heart and firmly retain this awakening consideration, "that multitudes miscarry by the hand of some secret sin, that is not only hidden from others, but for want of observing their own hearts, even from themselves." A man may be free from open pollutions, and yet die at last by the fatal hand of some unobserved iniquity; and there are these twelve hidden sins, through which souls go down by numbers into the chambers of eternal death: these you must search carefully for, and take them as black marks (wherever they be found) discovering a graceless and unconverted state; and as you love your lives, read carefully, with a holy jealousy of yourselves, lest you should be the persons concerned.

1. Gross willful ignorance. O how many poor souls doth this sin kill in the dark! Hos. 4:6, while they think verily they have good hearts, and are in the ready way to heaven! This is the murderer that despatcheth thousands in a silent manner, when (poor hearts!) they suspect nothing, and see not the hand that destroys them. You shall find, whatever excuses you make for ignorance, that it is a soul-ruining evil. Isa

27:11. 2 Thess. 1:8. 2 Cor. 4:3. Ah! would it not have grieved a man's heart to have seen that woful spectacle, when the poor Protestants were shut up, (a multitude together in a barn,) and a butcher came, with his inhuman hands warmed in human blood, and led them one by one (blindfold) to a block, where he slew them, one after another, by scores, in cold blood? But how much more should your hearts bleed to think of the hundreds, in great congregations, that ignorance doth destroy in secret, and lead blindfold to the block! Beware that this be not your case. Make no plea for ignorance; if you spare that sin, know that it will not spare you; and would a man keep a murderer in his bosom?

2. Secret reserves in closing with Christ. To forsake all for Christ, to hate father and mother, yea, a man's own life for him; Luke, 14: 26.—“This is a hard saying.” Some will do much, but they will not have the religion that will save them; they never come to be entirely devoted to Christ, nor fully to resign to him, they must have the sweet sin; they mean to do themselves no harm; they have secret exceptions for life, liberty, or estate. Many take Christ thus, and never consider his self-denying terms, nor count the cost, and this error in the foundation mars all, and secretly ruins them for ever.

3. Formality in religion. Many rest in the outside of religion, and in the external performance of holy duties. And this oftentimes doth most effectually deceive men, and more certainly undo them than open profaneness; as it was in the Pharisee's case. They hear, they fast, they pray, they give alms, and therefore will not believe but their case is good. Whereas, resting in the work done, and coming short of the

heart-work and the inward power and vitality of religion, they fall at last into the burning, from the flattering hopes and confident persuasions of their being in the ready way to heaven. O dreadful case, when a man's religion shall serve only to harden him, and effectually to delude and deceive his own soul!

4. False ends in holy duties. This was the ruin of the Pharisees. O how many a poor soul is undone by this, and drops into hell before he discerns his mistake! He performs his 'good duties,' and so thinks all is well, but perceives not that he is actuated by carnal motives all the while. It is too true, that, even with the really sanctified, many carnal ends will oft-times creep in; but they are the matter of their hatred and humiliation, and never come to be habitually prevalent with them and bear the greatest sway. But now, when the main thing that doth ordinarily carry a man out to religious duties shall be really some carnal end; as to satisfy his conscience, to get the reputation of being religious, "to be seen of men," to show his own gifts and parts, to avoid the reproach of a profane and irreligious person, or the like; this discovers an unsound heart. O Christian! if you would avoid self-deceit, see that you mind not only your acts, but withal (yea above all) your ends.

5. Trusting in their own righteousness. This is a soul-ruining mischief. When men trust in their own righteousness they do indeed reject Christ's. Beloved, you had need be watchful on every hand; for, not only your sins, but your duties may undo you. It may be you never thought of this, but so it is, that a man may as certainly miscarry by his seeming righteousness and supposed graces as by gross sins; and that is, when a man doth trust to these as his righteousness

before God, for the satisfying his justice, appeasing his wrath, procuring his favor, and obtaining his own pardon; for this is to put Christ out of office, and make a Savior of our own duties and graces. Beware of this, O professors; you are much in duties, but this one fly will spoil all the ointment. When you have done most and best, be sure go out of yourselves to Christ; reckon your own righteousness but filthy rags.

6. A secret enmity against the strictness of religion. Many moral persons, punctual in their formal devotions, have a bitter enmity against strictness and zeal, and hate the life and power of religion. They like not this forwardness, nor that men should make such a stir in religion; they condemn the strictness of religion as singularity, indiscretion, and intemperate zeal, and with them a lively preacher or lively Christian is but an enthusiast. These men love not holiness as holiness, (for then they would love the height of holiness,) and therefore are undoubtedly rotten at heart, whatever good opinion they have of themselves.

7 The resting in a certain degree of religion. When they have so much as will save them, (as they suppose,) they look no farther, and so show themselves short of true grace, which will ever put men upon aspiring to perfection.

8. The predominant love of the world. This is the sure evidence of an unsanctified heart. But how close doth this sin lurk oftentimes under the fair covert of forward profession! Yea, such a power of deceit is there in this sin, that many times, when every body else can see the man's worldliness and covetousness, he cannot see it himself, but hath so many colors, and excuses, and pretences for his eagerness after the world, that he doth blind his own eyes and perish in

his self-deceit. How many professors are there with whom the world hath more of their hearts and affections than Christ, "who mind earthly things," and thereby are evidently after the flesh, and like to end in destruction! Yet ask these men, and they will tell you confidently they prize Christ above all; for they see not their earthly-mindedness, for want of a strict observation of the workings of their own hearts. Did they but carefully search, they would quickly find that their greatest satisfaction is in the world, and their greatest care and main endeavor to get and secure the world; which are the certain signs of an unconverted sinner. May the professing part of the world take earnest heed that they perish not by the hand of this sin unobserved. Men may be, and often are, kept off from Christ as effectually by the inordinate love of lawful comforts, as by the most unlawful courses.

9. Reigning malice and envy against those that disrespect them, and are injurious to them. O! how do many, that seem to be religious, remember injuries and carry grudges. rendering evil for evil, loving to take revenge, wishing evil to them that wrong them, directly against the rule of the Gospel, the pattern of Christ, and the nature of God! Doubtless, where this evil is kept boiling in the heart, and is not hated, resisted, and mortified, but doth habitually prevail, that person is in the very gall of bitterness and in a state of death.

Reader, doth nothing of this touch thee? Art thou in none of the fore-mentioned ranks? O search, and search again; take thy heart solemnly to task. Wo unto thee, if, after thy profession, thou shouldst be found under the power of ignorance, lost in formality, crowned in earthly-mindedness, envenomed with ma-

lice. exalted in an opinion of thine own righteousness, leavened with hypocrisy and carnal ends in God's service, and embittered against strictness; this would be a sad discovery, that all thy religion were in vain. But I must proceed.

10. Unmortified pride. When men love the praise of men more than the praise of God, and set their hearts upon men's esteem, applause, and approbation, it is most certain that they are yet in their sins, and strangers to true conversion. When men see not, nor complain, nor groan under, the pride of their own hearts, it is a sign they are dead in sin. O, how secretly doth this sin live and reign in many hearts, and they know it not, but are very strangers to themselves!

11. The prevailing love of pleasure. This is a black mark. When men give the flesh the liberty that it craves, and pamper and please it, and do not deny and restrain it; when their great delight is in gratifying their appetites and pleasing their senses; whatever appearances they may have of religion, all is unsound. A flesh-pleasing life cannot be pleasing to God: "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh," and are careful to keep it under, as their enemy.

12. Carnal security, or a presumptuous ungrounded confidence that their condition is already good. Many cry, peace and safety, when sudden destruction is coming upon them. This was that which kept the foolish virgins sleeping when they should have been working, upon their beds when they should have been at the markets. They perceived not their want of oil, till the bridegroom was come; and while they went to buy, the door was shut. And, O! that these foolish virgins had no successors! Where is the place, yea, where is the house almost. where these do not dwell?

Men are willing to cherish in themselves, upon ever so slight grounds, a hope that their condition is good, and so look not out after a change, and by these means perish in their sins. Are you at peace? Show me upon what grounds your peace is maintained. Is it Scripture peace? Can you show the distinguishing marks of a sound believer? Can you evidence that you have something more than any hypocrite in the world ever had? If not, fear this peace more than any trouble; and know that a carnal peace doth commonly prove the most mortal enemy of the soul, and, whilst it smiles, and kisses, and speaks fairly, doth fatally smite, as it were, under the fifth rib.

By this time I think I hear my readers crying out with the disciples, "Who then shall be saved?" Set out from among our congregations all those ten ranks of the profane on the one hand, and then beside take out all these twelve sorts of close and self-deceiving hypocrites on the other hand, and tell me then whether it be not a small remnant that shall be saved! How few will be the sheep that shall be left, when all these shall be separated and set among the goats! For my part, of all my numerous hearers, I have no hope to see any of them in heaven that are to be found among these two-and-twenty sorts that are here mentioned, except by sound conversion they are brought into another condition.

Application.—And now, conscience, do thy office: speak out, and speak home to him that heareth or readeth these lines. If thou find any of these marks upon him, thou must pronounce him utterly unclean. Take not a lie in thy mouth; speak not peace to him to whom God speaks no peace; let not lust bribe thee, or self-love or carnal prejudice blind thee. I summon

thee from the court of heaven to come and give evidence: I require thee, in the name of God, to go with me in search of the suspected house. As thou wilt answer it at thy peril, give in a true report of the state and case of him that readeth this book. Conscience, wilt thou altogether hold thy peace at such a time as this? I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell the truth. Is the man converted, or is he not? Doth he allow himself in any way of wickedness, or doth he not? Doth he truly love, and please, and prize, and delight in God above all things, or not? Come, put it to an issue.

How long shall this soul live at uncertainties? O conscience, bring in thy verdict. Is this man a new man, or is he not? How dost thou find it? Hath there passed a thorough and mighty change upon him, or not? When was the time, where was the place, or what were the means by which this thorough change of the new birth was wrought in his soul? Speak, conscience; or if thou canst not tell the time and place, canst thou show Scripture evidence that the work is done? Hath the man been ever taken off from his false foundation, from the false hopes and false peace wherein once he trusted? Hath he been deeply convinced of sin, and of his lost or undone condition, and brought out of himself, and off from his sins, to give up himself entirely to Jesus Christ? or dost thou not find him to this day under the power of ignorance, or in the mire of worldliness? Hast thou not taken upon him the gains of unrighteousness? Dost thou not find him a stranger to prayer, a neglecter of the word, a lover of this present world? Dost thou not sometimes catch him in a lie? Dost thou not find his heart fermented with malice, or burning with lust, or

going after his covetousness? Speak plainly to all the forementioned particulars. Canst thou acquit this man, this woman, from being any of the two-and-twenty sorts here described? If he be found with any of them, set him aside; his portion is not with the saints. He must be converted and made a new creature, or he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Mortals, be not your own betrayers; do not deceive your own hearts, nor set your hands to your own ruin by a willful blinding of yourselves. Set up a tribunal in your own breasts: bring the word and conscience together. "To the law and to the testimony." Hear what the word concludes of your state. O follow the search till you find how the case stands. Mistake here, and you perish. And, such is the treachery of the heart, the subtlety of the tempter, and the deceitfulness of sin, all conspiring to flatter and deceive the poor soul, and withal so common and easy it is to mistake, that it is a thousand to one but you will be deceived, unless you be very careful, and earnest, and impartial in the inquiry into your spiritual condition. O therefore be diligent in your work; go to the bottom; search with candles; weigh you in the balance; come to the standard of the sanctuary; bring your coin to the touchstone. You have the archest cheats in the world to deal with; a world of counterfeit coin is passing; happy is he that takes no counterfeit for gold. Satan is master of deceit; he can draw to the life: he is perfect in the trade; there is nothing but he can imitate. You cannot wish for any grace, but he can fit you to a hair with a counterfeit. Be jealous; trust not so much to your own hearts. Go to God to search you and try you, to examine you and prove your reins. If other helps suffice not to bring all to an issue, but you are

still at a loss, open your case ingenuously to some godly and faithful minister, or Christian friend. Rest not till you have put the business of your eternal welfare out of doubt. "O Searcher of hearts, put thou this soul upon, and help him in his search."

CHAPTER V.

Showing the Miseries of the Unconverted.

So unspeakably dreadful is the case of every unconverted soul, that I have sometimes thought if I could but convince men that they are yet unregenerate, the work were more than half done.

But I find by sad experience that such a spirit of sloth and slumber possesses the unsanctified, that, though they be convinced that they are yet unconverted, they oft-times carelessly sit still; and through the love of sensual pleasure, or the hurry of worldly business, or the noise and clamor of earthly cares, and lusts, and affections, the voice of conscience is drowned, and men go no farther than some cold wishes and general purposes of repenting and amending.

It is therefore of high necessity that I not only convince men that they are unconverted, but that I also endeavour to bring them to a sense of the fearful misery of this state.

But here I find myself aground at first setting off. What tongue can tell them sufficiently of their misery, unless it were his who was in that flame? Luke, 16 : 24. Where is the ready writer whose pen can depict their misery who are without God in the world? This

cannot fully be done, unless we know the infinite ocean of bliss which is in perfection in God, and from which a state of sin doth exclude men. "Who knoweth" (saith Moses) "the power of thine anger?" And how shall I tell men that which I do not know? Yet so much we know, as one would think would shake the heart of that man that had the least degree of spiritual life and sense.

But this is yet the more perplexing difficulty, that I am to speak to them that are without spiritual sense. Alas! this is not the least part of man's misery, that he is dead, quite dead, in trespasses and sins.

Could I bring paradise into view, or represent the kingdom of heaven to as much advantage as the tempter did the kingdoms of the world, and all the glory thereof, to our Savior; or could I uncover the face of the deep and devouring gulf of Tophet in all its terrors, and open the gates of the infernal furnace; alas! he hath no eyes to see it. Could I paint the beauties of holiness or the glory of the Gospel; or could I expose to view the more than diabolical deformity and ugliness of sin: he can no more judge of the loveliness and beauty of the one, and the filthiness and hatefulness of the other, than a blind man of colors. He is alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in him because of the blindness of his heart. He neither doth nor can know the things of God, because they are spiritually discerned. His eyes cannot be savingly opened but by converting grace. He is a child of darkness, and walks in darkness. Yea, the light in him is darkness.

Shall I ring his knell, or read his sentence, or sound in his ears the terrible trump of God's judgments, that one would think should make both his ears to tingle,

and strike him into Belshazzar's fit, even to change his countenance, and to loose his joints, and make his knees to smite one against another? Alas! he perceives me not: he hath no ears to hear. Or shall I call up the daughters of music, and sing the song of Moses and the Lamb? Yet he will not be stirred. Shall I allure him with the joyful sound, and lovely song, and glad tidings of the Gospel? with the most sweet and inviting calls, comforts, and cordials of the divine promises so exceedingly great and precious? It will not affect him savingly, unless I could find him ears as well as tell him the news.

Shall I set before him the feast of fat things, the wine of wisdom, the bread of God, the hidden manna? He hath no appetite for them, no mind to them. Should I press the choicest grapes, the heavenly clusters of Gospel privileges, and drink to him in the richest wine of God's grace; or set before him the delicious honeycomb of God's testimonies? Alas! he hath no taste to discern them. Shall I invite the dead to rise and eat the banquet of their funerals? No more can the dead in sin relish the holy food wherewith the Lord of life hath spread his table.

What then shall I do? shall I uncover to him the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone? or shall I open the box of spikenard, very precious, that filleth the whole house of the universe with its perfume, and hope that the savor of Christ's ointments and the smell of his garments will attract him? Alas! dead sinners are like the dumb idols: they have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not; they have hands, but they handle not; feet have they, but they walk not; neither speak they

through their throat. They are destitute of spiritual sense and motion.

But let me try the sense that doth last leave us, and draw the sword of the word; yet, though I choose mine arrows out of God's quiver, and direct them to the heart, nevertheless he feeleth not; for how should he, being past feeling? so that, though "the wrath of God abideth on him," and the mountainous weight of so many thousand sins, yet he goes up and down as light as if nothing ailed him. In a word, he carries a dead soul in a living body, and his flesh is but the walking coffin of a corrupt mind that is twice dead. Jude, 12.

Which way then shall I come at the miserable objects that I have to deal with? Who shall make the heart of stone to relent, or the lifeless carcass to feel and move? That God who is able of "stones to raise up children unto Abraham;" "that raiseth the dead," "and melteth the mountains," and "strikes water out of the flint;" that loves to work like himself, beyond the hopes and belief of man; that peopleth his church with dry bones, and planteth his orchard with dry sticks; he is able to do this. Therefore "I bow my knees to the most high God;" and as our Savior prayed at the sepulchre of Lazarus, and the Shunamite ran to the man of God for her dead child, so doth your mourning minister kneel about your graves, and carry you in the arms of prayer to that God in whom your help is found.

"O thou all-powerful Jehovah, who workest, and none can hinder thee! who hast the keys of death and hell! pity thou the dead souls that lie here entombed, and roll away the grave-stone, and say as to the dead body of Lazarus, Come forth. Lighten thou this darkness, O inaccessible Light, and let the day-spring from

on high visit the dark regions of the dead, to whom I speak; for thou canst open the eye that death itself hath closed; thou that formedst the ear, canst restore the hearing: say thou to these ears, Ephphatha, and they shall be opened. Give thou eyes to see thine excellencies, a taste that may relish thy sweetness, a scent that may savor thy ointment, a feeling that may discern the privilege of thy favor, the burden of thy wrath, the intolerable weight of unpardoned sin; and give thy servant an order to prophesy to dry bones, and let the effects of this prophecy be as of thy prophet when he prophesied the valley of dry bones into a living army exceeding great." "The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones. He said to me, Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, O ye dry bones, hear the voice of the Lord, Thus saith the Lord unto these bones, Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live; and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise and a shaking; and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo! the sinews and flesh came upon them, and covered them above; but there was no breath in them. Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind; prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me: and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army."

But I must proceed, as I am able, to unfold that mystery which, I confess, no tongue can unfold, no heart can sufficiently comprehend.

Know therefore, that, while thou art unconverted,

1. The infinite God is engaged against thee.

It is no small part of thy misery that thou art "without God." How doth Micah run crying after the Danites, "Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more?" O what a mourning then must thou lift up that art without God, that canst lay no claim to him without daring usurpation! How piercing a moan is that of Saul in his last extremity, "The Philistines are upon me, and God is departed from me!" Sinners, but what will you do in the day of your visitation? Whither will you flee for help? Where will you leave your glory? What will you do when the Philistines are upon you; when the world shall take its eternal leave of you; when you must bid your friends, houses, and land, farewell for evermore? What will you do then, I say, that have not God to go to? Will you call on him? Will you cry to him for help? Alas! he will not own you. He will not take any notice of you; but send you away with, "I never knew you. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

They that know what it is to have a God to go to, a God to live upon—they know a little what a fearful misery it is to be without God. 'This made a holy man cry out, "Let me have God or nothing: let me know him and his will, and what will please him, and how I may come to enjoy him, or would I never had an understanding to know any thing!" &c.

But thou art not only without God, but God is against thee. O if God would but stand neuter, though he did not own nor help the poor sinner, his case were

not so deeply miserable; though God should give up the poor creature to the will of his enemies, to do their worst with him; though he should deliver him over to the tormentors, that devils should tear and torture him to their utmost power and skill, yet this were not half so fearful. But God will set himself against the sinner; and, believe it, "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." There is no friend like him, no enemy like him. As much as heaven is above the earth, omnipotence above impotence, infinity above nullity; so much more horrible is it to fall into the hands of the living God, than into the paws of bears and lions, yea, furies or devils. God himself will be thy tormentor; thy destruction shall come from the presence of the Lord. "Tophet is deep and large, the pile thereof is fire and much wood, and the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it."

"If God be against thee, who shall be for thee? If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?" "Thou, even thou, art to be feared; and who shall stand in thy sight when thou art angry?" Who or what shall deliver you out of his hands? Can mammon? "Riches profit not in the day of wrath." Can kings or warriors? No; "They shall cry to the mountains and rocks to fall on them, and hide them from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?"

Sinner! I think this should go like a dagger to thy heart, to know that God is thine enemy. O whither wilt thou go? where wilt thou shelter thee? There is no hope for thee, unless thou lay down thy weapons

and sue out thy pardon, and get Christ to stand thy friend and make thy peace. If it were not for this, thou mightest go into some howling wilderness, and there pine in sorrow, and run mad for anguish of heart and horrible despair. But in Christ there is a possibility of mercy for thee, yea, a proffer of mercy to thee, that thou mayest have God more for thee than he is now against thee. But if thou wilt not forsake thy sins, nor turn thoroughly and to some purpose to God, by a sound conversion, the wrath of God abideth on thee, and he proclaimeth himself to be against thee, as in the prophet: "Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold I, even I, am against thee!"

1. His face is against thee. "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them." Wo unto them whom God shall set his face against. When he did but look on the host of the Egyptians, how terrible was the consequence! "I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I am the Lord."

2. His heart is against thee. He hateth all the workers of iniquity. Man, doth not thy heart tremble to think of thy being an object of God's hatred? "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight." "My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me."

3. His hand is against thee. All his attributes are against thee.

His justice is like a flaming sword unsheathed against thee: "If I whet my glittering sword, and my hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to mine

adversaries, and will reward them that hate me: I will make mine arrows drunk with blood," &c.

So exact is justice, that it will by no means clear the guilty. God will not discharge thee, he will not hold thee guiltless, but will require the whole debt in person of thee, unless thou canst make a Scripture claim to Christ and his satisfaction. When the enlightened sinner looks on justice, and sees the balance in which he must be weighed and the sword by which he must be executed, he feels an earthquake in his breast; but Satan keeps this out of sight, and persuades the soul (while he can) that the Lord is all made up of mercy, and so lulls it asleep in sin. Divine justice is exact; it must have satisfaction to the utmost farthing: it denounceth "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, to every soul that doeth evil." It "curseth every one that continueth not in all things written in the law to do them." The justice of God to the unpardoned sinner that hath a sense of his misery, is more terrible than the sight of the bailiff or creditor to the bankrupt debtor, or than the sight of the judge and bench to the robber, or of the irons and gibbet to the guilty murderer. When justice sits upon life and death, what dreadful work doth it make to the wretched sinner! "Bind him hand and foot; cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." This is the terrible sentence that justice pronounceth. Sinner, by this severe justice must thou be tried; and as God liveth, this killing sentence must thou hear, unless thou repent and be converted.

The holiness of God is directly opposed to thee. He is not only angry with thee, (so he may be with his children,) but he hath a fixed, rooted, habitual displea-

sure against thee. "He loathes thee." God's nature is infinitely contrary to sin, and so he cannot delight in a sinner out of Christ.

O what misery is this, to be out of the favor, yea, under the hatred of God; that God, who can as easily lay aside his nature and cease to be God, as not to be contrary to thee and detest thee, except thou be changed and renewed. O sinner, how darest thou to think of the bright and radiant sun of purity, or the beauties, the glory of holiness that is in God! "The stars are not pure in his sight." "He humbles himself to behold things that are done in heaven." O those light and sparkling eyes of his! what do they spy in thee? and hast thou no interest in Christ neither, that he should plead for thee? I think he should hear thee crying out (astonished) with the Bethshemites, "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?"

The power of God is mounted like a mighty cannon against thee. The glory of God's power is to be displayed in the wonderful confusion and destruction of them that obey not the Gospel. He will "make his power known in them," how mightily he can torment them. For this end he raiseth them up, "that he might make his power known." O man, art thou able to make thy party good with thy Maker? No more can a silly reed against the cedars of God, or a little boat against the rolling ocean, or the children's bubbles against the blustering winds.

Sinner, the power of God's anger is against thee, and power and anger together make fearful work; it were better thou hadst all the world in arms against thee than to have the power of God against thee. There is no escaping his hands, no breaking his prison. "The thunder of his power, who can understand?"

Unhappy man that shall understand it by feeling it! "If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand. He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength : who hath hardened himself against him, and prospered ? which removeth the mountains, and they know it not ; which overturneth them in his anger ; which shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble ; which commandeth the sun, and it riseth not ; and sealeth up the stars ! Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him ? Who will say unto him, What doest thou ? If God will not withdraw his anger, the proud helpers do stoop under him." And art thou a fit match for such an antagonist ? "O consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." Submit to mercy ; let not dust and stubble stand out against the Almighty ; set not briars and thorns against him in battle, lest he go through them, and consume them together ; but lay hold on his strength, that you may "make peace with him." "Wo to him that striveth with his Maker !"

The wisdom of God is set to ruin thee. He hath ordained his arrows, and prepared instruments of death, and made all things ready. His counsels are against thee, to contrive thy destruction. He laughs to see how thou wilt be taken and ensnared in the evil day. "The Lord shall laugh at him, for he seeth that his day is coming." He sees how thou wilt come down mightily in a moment ; how thou wilt wring thy hands and gnash thy teeth for anguish of heart, when thou seest thou art fallen irremediably into the pit of destruction

The truth of God is sworn against thee. If he be true and faithful, thou must perish if thou goest on. Unless he be false to his word, thou must die, except

thou repent. If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself; that is, he is faithful to his threatenings as well as to his promises, and will show his faithfulness in our confusion, if we believe not. God hath told thee as plain as it can be spoken, that "if he wash thee not, thou hast no part in him;" that "if thou livest after the flesh, thou shalt die;" that "except thou be converted, thou shalt in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." Beloved, as the immutable faithfulness of God in his promise and oath affords believers strong consolation, so they are to unbelievers for strong consternation and confusion.

O sinner, tell me what dost thou think of all the threatenings of God's word that stand upon record against thee? Dost thou believe they are truth or not? If not, thou art a wretched infidel. But, if thou dost believe them, O heart of steel, that thou canst walk up and down in quiet, when the truth and faithfulness of God are engaged to destroy thee! so that, if the Almighty can do it, thou must surely perish. The whole book of God doth testify against thee while thou remainest unsanctified: it condemns thee in every leaf, and is to thee like Ezekiel's roll, written within and without with lamentation, and mourning, and wo. And all this shall surely come upon thee and overtake thee, except thou repent. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or tittle of this word shall never pass away."

Now, put all this together, and tell me if the case of the unconverted be not deplorably miserable. As we read of some persons that had bound themselves by an oath and a curse to kill Paul; so thou must know, O sinner, to thy terror, that all the attributes of an infinite God are bound by an oath to punish thee. O

man, what wilt thou do? whither wilt thou flee? If God's omniscience can find thee, thou shalt not escape. If the true and faithful God regard his oath, perish thou must, except thou believe and repent. If the Almighty hath power to torment thee, thou must be perfectly miserable in soul and body to all eternity, unless it be prevented by speedy conversion.

II. The whole creation of God is against thee. "The whole creation (saith Paul) groaneth and travaileth in pain." But what is it that the creation groaneth under? why, the fearful abuse that it is subject to in serving the lusts of unsanctified men. And what is it that the creation groaneth for? why, for freedom and liberty from this abuse; for the "creature is very unwillingly subject to this bondage." If the irrational and inanimate creatures had speech and reason, they would cry out under it, as a bondage insufferable, to be abused by the ungodly, contrary to their natures and the ends that the great Creator made them for. It is a saying of an eminent divine, 'The liquor that the drunkard drinketh, if it had reason, like a man, to know how shamefully it is abused, it would groan in the barrel against him, it would groan in the cup against him, groan in his throat, in his stomach against him; it would fly in his face, if it could speak. And if God should open the mouths of his creatures, as he did the mouth of Balaam's ass, the proud man's garment on his back would groan against him. There is never a creature, but if it had reason to know how it is abused till a man be converted, would groan against him: the land would groan to bear him; the air would groan to give him breath; their houses would groan to lodge them; their beds would groan to ease them, their food

to nourish them, their clothes to cover them, and the creature would groan to give them any help and comfort, so long as they live in sin against God.'

I think this should be a terror to an unconverted soul, to think he is a burden to the creation: "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" If inanimate creatures could but speak, thy food would say, Lord, must I nourish such a wretch as this, and yield forth my strength for him to dishonor thee? No, I will choke him rather, if thou wilt give me permission. The very air would say, Lord, must I give this man breath to speak against Heaven, and scorn thy people, and vent his pride and wrath, and filthy communication, and utter oaths and blasphemy against thee? No, if thou but say the word, he shall be breathless for me. His poor beast would say, Lord, must I carry him upon his wicked design? No, I will break his bones, I will end his days rather, if I may have leave from thee. A wicked man! the earth groans under him, and hell groans for him, till death satisfies both, and unburdens the earth. While the Lord of hosts is against thee, be sure the host of the Lord is against thee, and all the creatures, as it were, up in arms, till, upon a man's conversion, the controversy being settled between God and him, he makes a covenant of peace with the creature for him.

III. The roaring lion, Satan, hath his full power upon thee. Thou art led captive by him at his will. This is the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience. He is the ruler of the darkness of this world, that is, of ignorant sinners who live in darkness. You pity the poor Indians that worship the devil for their god, but little think it is your own case. Why,

it is the common misery of all the unsanctified, that the devil is their God. Not that they intend to do him homage; they will be ready to defy him, and him that should say so of them; but all this while they serve him, and live under his government. His servants ye are to whom ye obey. Rom. 6 : 16. O how many then will be found the real servants of the devil, that take themselves for no other than the children of God! He can no sooner offer a sinful delight or opportunity for your unlawful advantage, but you embrace it. If he suggest a lie, or prompt you to revenge, you readily obey. If he forbid you to read or pray, you hearken to him, and therefore his servants you are. Indeed he stands behind the curtain, he acts in the dark, and sinners see not who setteth them on work, but all the while he leads them. Doubtless the liar intends not a service to Satan, but his own advantage; yet it is he that stands unobserved and putteth the thing into his heart. Undoubtedly Judas, when he sold his Master for money, and the Chaldeans and Sabeans, when they plundered Job, intended not to do the devil a pleasure, but to satisfy their own covetous thirst; yet it was he that actuated them in their wickedness. Men may be very slaves and common drudges for the devil, and never know it: nay, they may please themselves in thoughts of liberty.

Art thou yet in ignorance, and not turned from darkness unto light? Why, thou art under the power of Satan. Dost thou live in the wilful practice of any known sin? Know that thou art of the devil. Dost thou live in strife, or envy, or malice? Verily he is thy father. O dreadful case! However Satan may provide his slaves with divers pleasures, yet it is but to draw them into endless perdition. The serpent comes

with the fruit in his mouth, O but (with Eve) thou seest not the deadly sting in his tail! He that is now thy tempter, will one day be thy tormentor. O that I could but give thee to see how black a master thou servest, how filthy a drudgery thou dost, how merciless a tyrant thou gratifiest; all whose pleasure is to set thee on work to make thy perdition and damnation sure, and to heat the furnace hotter and hotter in which thou must burn for millions and millions of ages!

IV. The guilt of all thy sins lies like a mountain upon thee. Poor soul! thou feelest it not; but this is that which seals thy misery upon thee. While unconverted, none of thy sins are blotted out, they are all upon the score against thee. Regeneration and remission are never separated; the unsanctified are unquestionably unjustified and unpardoned. It is a fearful thing to be in debt, but above all, in God's debt; for there is no arrest so formidable as his, no prison so dreary as his. Look upon an enlightened sinner who feels the weight of his own guilt: O how frightful are his looks, how fearful are his complaints! his comforts are turned into wormwood, and his moisture into drought, and his sleep is departed from his eyes. He is a terror to himself and all that are about him, and is ready to envy the very stones that lie in the street, because they are senseless and feel not his misery, and wisheth he had been a dog, or a toad, or a serpent, rather than a man, because then death had put an end to his misery; whereas now it will be but the beginning of that which will know no ending.

How light soever you may make it now, you will one day find the guilt of unpardoned sin to be a heavy burden. This is a mill-stone, that "whosoever falleth

upon it shall be broken; but upon whomsoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder." The guilt of our sins caused the agony and death of the blessed Savior. And if it did this in the green tree, what will it do in the dry?

O think of thy case in time! Canst thou think of that threat without trembling, "Ye shall die in your sins?" O, better were it for thee to die in a jail, in a ditch, in a dungeon, than die in thy sins! If death, as it will take away all thy comforts, would take away thy sins too, it were some mitigation; but thy sins will follow thee when thy friends leave thee, and all worldly enjoyments shake hands with thee. Thy sins will not die with thee as a prisoner's other debts will; but they will go to judgment with thee, there to be thy accusers; and they will go to hell with thee, there to be thy tormentors. Better to have so many fiends and furies about thee, than thy sins to fall upon thee and fasten on thee. O the work that these will make thee! O look over thy debts in time, how much thou art in the books of every one of God's laws; how every one of God's commandments is ready to arrest thee, and take thee by the throat for the innumerable bonds it hath upon thee! What wilt thou do then, when they shall all together come in against thee? Hold open the eyes of thy conscience to consider this, that thou mayest despair of thyself and be driven to Christ, and flee for refuge to "lay hold on the hope that is set before thee."

V. Thy raging lusts do miserably enslave thee. While unconverted, thou art a very servant to sin: it reigns over thee, and holds thee under its dominion, till thou art brought within the bonds of God's cove-

nant. There is not such another tyrant as sin. O the filthy and fearful work that it doth engage its servants in!

Would it not pierce thy heart to see a company of poor creatures drudging and toiling to carry together fagots and fuel for their own burning? This is the employment of sin's drudges. Even while they bless themselves in their unrighteous gains, while they sing in pleasures, they are but treasuring up vengeance for their eternal burning; they are but adding to the pile of Tophet, and flinging in oil to make the flame rage the fiercer. Who would serve such a master, whose work is drudgery, whose wages are death?

What a woful spectacle was the poor wretch possessed with the legion! Would it not have grieved thy heart to have seen him among the tombs cutting and wounding himself? This is thy case; such is thy work; every stroke is a thrust at thy heart. Conscience indeed is now asleep; but, when death and judgment shall bring thee to thy senses, then wilt thou feel the anguish in every wound. The *convinced* sinner is a sensible instance of the miserable bondage of sin: conscience flies upon him, and tells him the end of these things; and yet such a slave he is to his lusts that on he goes, though he sees it will be his perdition: when the temptation comes, lust breaks the cords of all his vows and promises, and carries him headlong to his own destruction.

VI. The furnace of eternal vengeance is heated ready for thee. Hell and destruction open their mouths upon thee; they gape for thee; they groan for thee, Isa. 5: 14; waiting as it were with a greedy eye as thou standest on the brink. If the wrath of men be "as the

roaring of a lion," "more heavy than the sands," what is the wrath of the infinite God! If the burning furnace heated in Nebuchadnezzar's fiery rage, when he commanded it to be made yet seven times hotter, was so fierce as to burn up even those that drew near to throw the three children in, how hot is that burning of the Almighty's fury! Surely this is seventy times seven more fierce. What thinkest thou, O man, of being a fagot in hell to all eternity? "Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong in the day that I shall deal with thee? saith the Lord of hosts." Canst thou abide the everlasting burnings? Canst thou dwell with consuming fire? when thou shalt be as glowing iron in hell, and thy whole body and soul shall be as perfectly possessed by God's burning vengeance as the sparkling iron with fire, when heated in the fiercest furnace? Thou canst not bear God's whip; how then wilt thou endure his scorpions? Thou art even crushed, and ready to wish thyself dead, under the weight of his finger, how then wilt thou bear the weight of his heavy arm? Some of the choicest servants of God, when under the hidings of his face, and dreading the effects of his displeasure, have bewailed their condition with bitter lamentations. How then wilt thou endure when God shall pour out all his vials, and set himself against thee, to torment thee? when he shall make thy conscience the tunnel by which he will be pouring his burning wrath into thy soul for ever, and when he shall fill all thy pores as full of torment as they are now full of sin; when immortality shall be thy misery, and to die the death of a brute, and be swallowed in the gulf of annihilation, shall be such a felicity as the whole eternity of wishes and an ocean of tears shall never purchase?

Now thou canst put off the evil day, and laugh and be merry, and forget "the terror of the Lord." But how wilt thou hold out, or hold up, when God will cast thee into a "bed of torments," and make thee to "lie down in sorrow?" when roarings and blasphemies shall be thy only music, and the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation, shall be thy only drink? and when thou shalt draw in flames for thy breath? in a word, when the smoke of thy torment shall ascend for ever and ever, and thou shalt have no rest day nor night, no rest in thy conscience, no ease in thy bones; but thou shalt be an execration and astonishment, and a curse and a reproach! for evermore? Jer. 42 : 18.

O sinner! stop here, and consider. If thou art a man, and not a senseless block, consider. Bethink thyself where thou standest—why, upon the very brink of this furnace. As the Lord liveth, and thy soul liveth, there is but a step between thee and this. Thou knowest not, when thou liest down, but thou mayest be in hell before morning: thou knowest not, when thou risest, but thou mayest drop in before night. Darest thou make light of this? Wilt thou go on in such a dreadful condition, as if nothing ailed thee? If thou puttest it off, and sayest, "This doth not belong to thee," look again over the foregoing chapter, and tell me the truth. Are none of those black marks found upon thee? Do not blind thine eyes; do not deceive thyself; see thy misery while thou mayest prevent it. Think what it is to be a vile outcast, a lost reprobate, a vessel of wrath, into which the Lord will be pouring out his tormenting fury while he hath a being.

Divine wrath is a fierce, devouring, everlasting, unquenchable fire, and thy soul and body must be the

fuel upon which it must be feeding for ever, unless thou consider thy ways, and speedily turn to the Lord by a sound conversion. They that have been singed by this fire, and had but the smell thereof passing upon them before they died, O what amazing spectacles they have been! Whose heart would not have melted to have heard Spira's outcries?—to have seen Chaloner, that monument of justice, worn to skin and bone, blaspheming the God of heaven, cursing himself, and continually crying out, "O torture, torture, torture! O torture, torture!" as if the flames of wrath had already taken hold on him?—to have heard Rogers crying out, "I have had a little pleasure, but now I must have hell for evermore!" wishing but for this mitigation, that God would but let him lie burning for ever behind the oak of that fire, (on the hearth,) and bringing in his sad conclusion still, at the end of whatever was spoken to him to afford him some hope, "I must go to hell, I must go to hell, I must go to the furnace of hell, for millions and millions of ages!" O! if the fears and forethoughts of the wrath to come be so terrible, so intolerable, what must be the feeling of it?

Sinner, it is in vain to flatter you: this would be but to draw you into the unquenchable fire. Know ye from the living God, that here you must lie; with these burnings you must dwell till immortality die and immutability change, till eternity run out and omnipotence is no longer able to punish, except you be in good earnest renewed throughout by sanctifying grace.

VII. The law discharges all its threats and curses at thee. O how dreadfully doth it thunder! It flashes devouring fire in thy face. Its words are as drawn swords, and as the sharp arrows of the mighty. It demands sa-

tsfaction to the utmost, and cries, Justice! Justice! It speaks blood, and war, and wounds, and death, against thee.

Read Deuteronomy. O man, away to thy strong hold; away from thy sins; haste to the sanctuary, the city of refuge—even the Lord Jesus Christ; hide thee in him, or else thou art lost, without any hope of recovery.

VIII. The Gospel itself bindeth the sentence of eternal damnation upon thee. If thou continuest in thine impenitent and unconverted state, know that the Gospel denounceth a much sorer condemnation than ever would have been for the transgression only of the first covenant. Is it not a dreadful case to have the Gospel itself fill its mouth with threats, thunder, and damnation? “To have the Lord to roar from mount Zion against thee?” “Hear the terror of the Lord. He that believeth not shall be damned. Except ye repent, ye shall all perish.” “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light.” “He that believeth not, the wrath of God abideth on him.” “If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” “He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy: of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy that hath trodden under foot the Son of God?”

Application.—And is this true indeed? Is this thy misery? Yea, it is as true as God is. Better open thine eyes and see it now, while thou mayest remedy it, than blind and harden thyself till (to thy eternal sorrow) thou shalt feel what thou wouldst not believe; and if

it be true, what dost thou mean, to loiter and linger in such a case as this?

Alas for thee, poor man! how effectually hath sin undone thee, and deprived and despoiled thee even of thy reason to look after thine own everlasting good! O miserable wretch! what stupidity and senselessness have surprised thee! O let me knock up and awake this sleeper! Who dwells within the walls of this flesh? Is there ever a soul here, a rational, understanding soul? or art thou only a senseless lump?

Art thou a reasonable soul, and yet so far brutified as to forget that thou art immortal, and to think thyself to be as the beasts that perish? Art thou turned into flesh, that thou savorest nothing but gratifying the sense, and making provision for the flesh? or else, having reason to understand the eternity of the future state, dost thou yet make light of being everlastingly miserable, which is to be so much below the brute, as it is worse to act against reason than to act without it? O unhappy soul, that wast the glory of man, the companion of angels, and the image of God! that wast God's representative in the world, and hadst the supremacy amongst the creatures, and the dominion over thy Maker's works! art thou now become a slave to sense, a servant to so base an idol as thy belly, pampering a vile body that must soon be food for worms? or art thou heaping together a little refined earth, no more suitable to thy spiritual immortal nature than the dirt and sticks? O why dost thou not bethink thee where thou shalt be for ever? Death is at hand; "the Judge is even at the door." Yet a little while, and "time shall be no longer." And wilt thou run the hazard of continuing in such a state, in which, if thou be overtaken, thou art irrecoverably miserable?

Come then, arise, and attend thy nearest concerns! Tell me whither art thou going? What! wilt thou live in such a course, wherein every act is a step to perdition; and thou dost not know but the next night thou mayest make thy bed in hell? O! if thou hast a spark of reason, consider, and turn and hearken to thy true friend, who would show thee thy present misery, that thou mightest in time make thine escape, and be eternally happy.

Hear what the Lord saith: "Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence?" O sinners, do you make light of "the wrath to come?" I am sure there is a time coming when you will not make light of it. Why, the very "devils believe and tremble." What! are you more hardened than they? Will you run upon the edge of the rock? Will you play at the hole of the asp? Will you put your hand upon the cockatrice's den? Will you dance upon the fire till you are burnt, or dally with devouring wrath as if you were indifferent whether you escape or endure it? O madness of folly! like that of a madman that casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, and saith, "Am not I in sport!" There is no one so insane as the wilful sinner, that goeth on in his unconverted state without sense, as if nothing ailed him. The man that runs into the cannon's mouth, and sports with his blood, or lets out his life in a frolic, is sensible, sober, and serious, compared with him that goeth on still in his trespasses; for "he stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty: he runneth upon him, even upon his neck, upon the thick bosses of his buckler." Is it wisdom to sport with the second death, or to venture into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, as if thou wert but going to

wash thee, or swim for recreation? Wilt thou, as it were, jump into eternal flames, as the children through the bonfire? What shall I say? I can find out no expression, no comparison, whereby to set forth the dreadful madness of the soul that will go on in sin.

Awake, awake! O sinner, arise and take thy flight. There is but one door that thou mayest flee by, and that is the strait door of conversion and the new birth. Unless thou turn unfeignedly from all thy sins, and come to Jesus Christ, and take him for the Lord thy righteousness, and walk in him in holiness and newness of life; as the Lord liveth, it is not more certain that thou art now out of hell, than that thou shalt without fail be in it but a few days or nights hence. O set thy heart to think of thy case. Is not thy everlasting misery or welfare that which doth deserve a little consideration? Look again over the miseries of the unconverted. If the Lord hath not spoken by me, regard me not; but if it be the very word of God that all this misery lies upon thee, what a case art thou in! Is it for one that hath his senses to live in such a condition, and not to make all possible expedition for preventing his utter ruin? O man, who hath bewitched thee, Gal. 3 : 1, that in the matters of this present life thou shalt be wise enough to forecast thy business, foresee thy danger, and prevent thy ruin; but in matters of everlasting consequence be slight and careless, as if they little concerned thee? Why, is it nothing to thee to have all the attributes of God engaged against thee? Canst thou do well without his favor? Canst thou escape his hands, or endure his vengeance? Dost thou hear the creation groaning under thee, and hell groaning for thee, and yet think thy case good enough? Art thou under the power of corruption, in the dark

noisome prison, fettered with lusts, working out thy own damnation—and is not this worth a thought?

Wilt thou make light of all the terrors of the law, of all its curses and thunderbolts, as if they were but the threatenings of a child? Dost thou laugh at hell and destruction, or canst thou drink the envenomed cup of the Almighty's fury, as if it were but a common potion?

Gird up now thy loins like a man, for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Art thou such a leviathan as that the scales of thy pride should keep thee from thy Maker's coming at thee? Wilt thou esteem his arrows as straw, and the instruments of death as rotten wood? Art thou chief of all the children of pride, even that thou shouldst count his darts as stubble, and laugh at the shaking of his spear? Art thou made without fear, and contemnest thou his barbed arrows? Art thou like the horse that paweth in the valley and rejoiceth in his strength, who goeth out to meet the armed men? Dost thou mock at fear, and art thou not affrighted, neither turnest back from God's sword when his quiver rattleth against thee, the glittering spear and the shield? Well, if the threats and calls of the word will not fright thee nor awaken thee, I am sure death and judgment will. O what wilt thou do when the Lord cometh forth against thee, and in his fury falleth upon thee, and thou shalt feel what thou readest? If when Daniel's enemies were cast into the den of lions, both they and their wives and their children, the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces ere they came at the bottom of the den, Dan. 6: 24, what shall become of thee when thou fallest into the hands of the living God, when he shall gripe thee in his strong arms, and grind and crush thee in his wrath?

O do not then contend with God. "Repent and be converted," so none of this shall come upon thee. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

CHAPTER VI.

CONTAINING DIRECTIONS TO THE UNCONVERTED.

And there came one, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?—
Mark, 10: 17.

Before thou readest these directions, I advise thee, yea, I charge thee, before God and his holy angels, that thou resolve to follow them, (as far as conscience shall be convinced of their agreeableness to God's word and thy state,) and call in his assistance and blessing that they may succeed. And as I have sought the Lord and consulted his oracles what advice to give thee, so must thou entertain it with that awe, reverence, and purpose of obedience which the word of the living God requires.

Now then, attend: "Set your heart unto all that I shall testify unto you this day; for it is not a vain thing—it is your life." This is the end of all that has been spoken hitherto, to bring you to set your heart to this great work and turn without delay to the living God. I would not trouble you, nor "torment you before the time," with the thoughts of your eternal misery, but

in order to your making your escape. Were you shut up under your present misery without remedy, it were but mercy (as one speaks) to let you alone, that you might take in that little poor comfort which you are capable of in this world; but you may yet be happy, if you do not wilfully refuse the means of your recovery. Behold, I hold open the door to you; arise, take your flight; I set the way of life before you; walk in it, and you shall live, and not die. It grieves me to think you should be your own murderers, and throw yourselves headlong, when God and man cry out to you, as Peter in another case to his Master, "Spare thyself."

The destruction of ungodly men is wilful. God that made them crieth out to them, as Paul to the distracted jailor when about to murder himself, "Do thyself no harm." The ministers of Christ forewarn them, and follow them, and would gladly have them back; but alas! no expostulations or entreaties will prevail, but men will hurl themselves into perdition, while pity itself looketh on.

What shall I say? Would it not grieve a person of any humanity, if, in the time of a raging plague, he should have a remedy (as one said well) that would infallibly cure all the country and recover the most hopeless patients, and yet his friends and neighbors should die by hundreds about him, because they would not use it? Men and brethren, though you carry the certain symptoms of death in your faces, yet I have a receipt that will cure you all infallibly. Follow but these directions, and if you do not then reach heaven, I will be content to lose it.

Hear then, O sinner! and as ever thou wouldst be converted and saved, embrace this following counsel.

I. Attend conscientiously upon the word, as the means appointed for thy conversion. Attend, I say, not customarily, but conscientiously; with this desire, design, hope, and expectation, that thou mayest be converted by it. To every sermon thou hearest come with this thought; 'O I hope God will now come in; I hope this day may be the time, this may be the man by whom God will bring me home.' When thou art coming to the privileges of God's house, lift up thy heart thus to God: "Lord, let this be the Sabbath, let this be the season wherein I may receive renewing grace. O let it be said that this day such a one was born unto thee."

Object. Thou wilt say, I have been long a hearer of the word, and yet it hath not been effectual to my conversion. *Ans.* Yea; but thou hast not attended upon it in this manner, nor resolved to receive it into thine heart, and obey all the words which the Lord your God should speak unto you.

II. Set upon the constant and diligent use of serious and fervent prayer. He that neglects prayer is a profane and unsanctified sinner. He that is not constant in prayer is but a hypocrite, unless the omission be contrary to his ordinary course, under the force of some instant temptation. This is one of the first things conversion appears in, that it sets men a praying. Therefore set to this duty; let not one day pass over thee wherein thou hast not, morning and evening, set apart some time for set and solemn prayer in secret. Call thy family also together daily and duly to worship God with thee. Wo be unto thee, if thou be found among the families that call not upon God's name. But cold and lifeless devotions will not reach half way to heaven. Be fervent and importunate.

Importunity will carry it; but without violence the kingdom of heaven will not be taken. Thou must strive to enter, and wrestle with tears and supplications, as Jacob, If thou meanest to carry the blessing. Thou art undone for ever without grace, and therefore thou must set to it, and resolve to take no denial. That man who is fixed in this resolution says: 'Well, I must have grace, or I will never give over till I have grace; I will never cease earnestly pleading, and striving with God and my own heart, till he doth renew me by the power of his grace.'

III. Forsake thy evil company, and forbear the occasions of sin.

Thou wilt never be turned from sin till thou wilt decline and forego the temptations of sin. I never expect thy conversion from sin, unless thou art brought to some self-denial, so as to flee the occasions. If thou wilt be nibbling at the bait, and playing on the brink, and tampering and meddling with the snare, thy soul will surely be taken. Where God doth expose men, in his providence, unavoidably to temptation, and the occasions are such as we cannot remove, we may expect special assistance in the use of his means; but when we tempt God by running into danger, he will not engage to support us when we are tempted. And, of all temptations, one of the most fatal and pernicious is evil companions. O what hopeful beginnings have these often stifled! O the souls, the estates, the families, the towns, that these have ruined! How many poor sinners have been enlightened and convinced, and been just ready to give the devil the slip, and have even escaped the snare; and yet wicked company has pulled them back at last, and made them seven-fold more the children of hell? In a word, I have no hopes

of thee, except thou wilt shake off thy evil company. Thy life depends upon it: forsake this, or else thou canst not live. Wilt thou be worse than the beast, to run on when thou seest the Lord with a drawn sword in the way? Let this sentence be written in capitals upon thy conscience: "A COMPANION OF FOOLS SHALL BE DESTROYED." The Lord hath spoken it, and who shall reverse it?

And wilt thou run upon destruction, when God himself doth forewarn thee? If God doth ever change thy heart, it will appear in the change of thy company. O fear and flee the gulf by which so many thousand souls have been swallowed up in perdition. It will be hard for thee indeed to make thy escape. Thy companions will be mocking thee out of thy religion, and will study to fill thee with prejudices against strictness, as ridiculous and comfortless. They will be flattering thee and alluring thee; but remember the warnings of the Holy Ghost, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Come with us, cast in thy lot among us; walk thou not in the way with them, refrain thy foot from their path; avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. For the way of the wicked is as darkness, they know not at what they stumble. They lie in wait for their own blood, they lurk privily for their own lives." My soul is moved within me to see how many of my hearers and readers are likely to perish, both they and their houses, by this wretched mischief, even the haunting of such places and company, whereby they are drawn into sin. Once more I admonish you, as Moses did Israel. "And he spake unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men." O flee them as you would those that had the plague-sores running

in their foreheads. These are the devil's panders and decoys; and if thou dost not make thy escape they will draw thee into perdition, and will prove thy eternal ruin.

IV. Set apart a day to humble thy soul in secret by fasting and prayer, to work a sense of thy sins and miseries upon thy heart.

Read over our Lord's discourse, Matt. 5, and write down the duties omitted and sins committed by thee against every commandment, and so make a catalogue of thy sins, and with shame and sorrow spread them before the Lord.

V. Strike in with the Spirit when he begins to work upon thy heart. When he works convictions, O do not stifle them, but join in with him, and beg the Lord to give you saving conversion. "Quench not the Spirit;" do not reject him, do not resist him. Beware of putting out convictions with evil company or worldly business. When thou art in anguish on account of sin, and fears about thy eternal state, beg of God that you may have peace only in thoroughly renouncing all sin, loathing it in thy inmost soul, and giving thy whole heart, without reserve, to Christ. Say to him, "Strike home, Lord; leave not the work in the midst. Show me all my guilt, so far as nature can bear it. O go to the bottom of my corruption, and let out the life-blood of my sins." Thus yield up thyself to the working of the Spirit, and hoist thy sails to his gusts.

VI. Set it down with thyself as an undoubted truth, that it is impossible for thee ever to get to heaven in this thy unconverted state.

Can any other but Christ save thee? and he tells thee he will never do it except thou be regenerated and

converted. Doth he not keep the keys of heaven? and canst thou go in without his leave? as thou must, if ever thou come thither in thy natural condition, without a sound and thorough renovation.

VII. Labor to get a thorough sight and lively sense and feeling of thy sins.

Till men are weary and heavy laden, and pricked at the heart, and quite sick of sin, they will not come to Christ, in his way, for cure, nor to purpose inquire, "What shall we do?" They must set themselves down for dead men, before they will come unto Christ, that they may have life. Labor, therefore, to set all thy sins in order before thee; never be afraid to look upon them, but let thy spirit make diligent search. Inquire into thine heart, and into thy life; enter into a thorough examination of thyself and all thy ways, that thou mayest make a full discovery; and call in the help of God's Spirit, in the sense of thine own inability hereunto, for it is his proper work to convince of sin. Spread all before thy conscience, till thy heart and eyes be set weeping. Leave not striving with God and thine own soul, till it cry out under the sense of thy sins, as the enlightened jailor, "What must I do to be saved?" To this purpose,

Meditate on the number of thy sins. David's heart failed when he thought of this, and considered that he had more sins than hairs on his head. This made him cry out upon the multitude of God's tender mercies. An unsanctified soul swarms with filthy lusts: they fill the head, the heart, the eyes, the mouth. Look backward; where was ever the place, what was ever the time, in which thou didst not sin? Look inward; what part or power canst thou find in soul or body but it is poisoned with sin? what duty dost thou ever per-

form, into which this poison is not shed? O how great is the sum of thy debts, who hast been all thy life running upon trust, and never didst or canst pay off one penny! Look over the sin of thy nature, and all its cursed brood, the sins of thy life. Call to mind thy omissions and commissions; the sins of thy thoughts, words, and actions; the sins of thy youth, and the sins of thy riper years. Be not like a desperate bankrupt, that is afraid to look over his books. Read the records of conscience carefully. These books must be opened sooner or later.

Meditate on the aggravations of thy sins, as they are the grand enemies of the God of thy life, and of the life of thy soul: in a word, they are the public enemies of all mankind. How do David, Ezra, Daniel, and the good Levites, aggravate their sins, from the consideration of their rebellion against God, their opposition to his good and righteous laws, and the mercies and warnings they were committed against! O the work that sin has made in the world! This is the enemy that has brought in death; that has robbed and enslaved man; that has done the work of the devil, and digged hell. This is the enemy that has turned the world upside down, and sown dissensions between man and the creatures, betwixt man and man, yea, between man and himself, setting the animal part against the rational, the will against the judgment, lust against conscience; yea, worst of all, between God and man, making the sinner both hateful to God and the hater of himself. O man! how canst thou make so light of sin? This is the traitor that thirsted for the blood of the Son of God, that sold him, that mocked him, that scourged him, that spit in his face, that tore his hands, that pierced his side, that pressed his soul, that man

gled his body, that never left till he had bound him, condemned him, nailed him, crucified him, and put him to an open shame. This is that deadly poison; so powerful of operation that one drop of it, shed on the root of mankind, has corrupted, spoiled, poisoned, and ruined his whole race. This the bloody executioner that has killed the prophets, burnt the martyrs, murdered all the apostles, all the patriarchs, all the kings and potentates; that has destroyed cities, swallowed empires, butchered and devoured whole nations. Whatever was the weapon it was done by, it was sin that caused the execution. Dost thou yet think it but a small thing? If Adam and all his children could be dug out of their graves, and their bodies piled up to heaven, and an inquest were made what matchless murderer were guilty of all this blood; it would be all found in sin. Study the nature of sin, till thy heart incline to fear and loathe it; and meditate on the aggravations of thy particular sins, how thou hast sinned against all God's warnings, against thy own prayers, against mercies, against corrections, against clearest light, against freest love, against thine own resolutions, against promises, vows, and covenants of better obedience. Charge thy heart home with these things till it blush for shame, and be brought out of all good opinion of itself.

Meditate on the desert of sin. It crieth up to Heaven; it calls for vengeance. Its due wages are death and damnation; it draws the curse of God upon the soul and body. The least sinful word or thought lays thee under the infinite wrath of God. O what a load of wrath, what a weight of curses, what treasures of vengeance, have all the millions of thy sins deserved! O judge thyself, that the Lord may not judge thee.

Meditate on the deformity and defilement of sin. It is as black as hell, the very image and likeness of the devil drawn upon the soul. 1 John, 3 : 8, 10. It would affright thee to see thyself in the hateful deformity of thy nature. There is no mire so unclean, no plague or leprosy so noisome as sin, in which thou art plunged and covered with its odious filth, whereby thou art rendered more displeasing to the pure and holy nature of the glorious God than the most filthy object, composed of whatever is hateful to all thy senses, can be to thee. Couldst thou take up a toad into thy bosom? Couldst thou cherish it, and take delight in it? Why, thou art as contrary to the pure and perfect holiness of the divine nature, and as loathsome as that is to thee, till thou art purified by the blood of Jesus and the power of renewing grace.

Above all other sins, fix the eye of consideration on these two. 1. The sin of thy *heart*. It is to little purpose to lop off the branches while the root of corruption remains untouched. In vain do men lave out the streams, when the fountain is running that fills up all again. Let the axe of thy repentance (with David's) go to the root of sin. Study how deep, how close, how permanent is thy natural pollution, how universal it is, till thou dost cry out, with Paul, upon thy body as dead.

Look into all thy parts and powers, and see what unclean vessels, what sinks they are become. The heart is never soundly broken till thoroughly convinced of the heinousness of its original and deep-rooted depravity. Here fix thy thoughts; this is that which makes thee backward to all good, and prone to all evil. That sheds blindness, pride, prejudice, and unbelief into thy mind; enmity, inconstancy, and o-

stinacy into thy will; inordinate heats and colds into thy affections; insensibleness and unfaithfulness into thy conscience; slipperiness into thy memory; and, in a word, hath put every wheel of the soul out of order, and made it, of a habitation of holiness, to become a very hell of iniquity. This is what hath defiled and perverted all thy members, and turned them into weapons of unrighteousness, and servants of sin; that hath filled the head with carnal and corrupt designs; the hand with sinful practices; the eyes with wandering and wantonness; the tongue with deadly poison; that hath opened the ears to tales, flattery, and filthy communication, and shut them against the instructions of life; and hath rendered thy heart the cursed source of all deadly imaginations, so that it poureth out its wickedness without ceasing even as naturally as a fountain doth pour forth its waters, or the raging sea doth cast forth mire and dirt. And wilt thou yet be in love with thyself, and tell us any longer of thy good heart? O never leave meditating on the desperate contagion, the original corruption of thy heart, till, with Ephraim, thou bemoan thyself; and with the deepest shame and sorrow smite on thy breast, as the Publican; and, with Job, abhor thyself, and repent in dust and ashes.

2. The particular evil that thou art most addicted to: find out all its aggravations, set home upon thy heart all God's threats against it; repentance drives before it the whole herd, but especially sticks the arrow in the beloved sin, and singles this out above the rest, to run it down. O labor to make this sin odious to thy soul, and double thy guard and resolutions against it, because this doth most dishonor God and endanger thee.

VIII. Strive to affect thy heart with a deep sense of thy present misery. Read over the foregoing chapter

again and again, and get it out of the book into thy heart. Remember, when thou liest down, that, for aught thou knowest, thou mayest awake in flames; and when thou risest up, that by the next night thou mayest make thy bed in hell. Is it a just matter to live in such a fearful case, to stand tottering on the brink of the bottomless pit; and to live at the mercy of every disease, that, if it but fall upon thee, will send thee forthwith into the burnings? Suppose thou sawest a condemned wretch hanging over Nebuchadnezzar's burning fiery furnace by nothing but a thread which was ready to break every moment, would not thy heart tremble for such a one? Why, thou art the man: this is thy very case, O man, woman, that readest this, if thou be yet unconverted. What if the thread of thy life should break, (why, thou knowest not but it may be the next night, yea, the next moment,) where wouldst thou be then? Whither wouldst thou drop? Verily, upon the breaking of this thread, thou fallest into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, where thou must lie scalding and burning in a fiery ocean while God hath a being, if thou die in thy present case. And doth not thy soul tremble as thou readest? Do not thy tears bedew the paper, and thy heart throb in thy bosom? Dost thou not yet begin to smite on thy breast, and bethink thyself what need thou hast of a change? O what is thy heart made of? Hast thou not only lost all regard to God, but hast thou lost all love and pity to thyself?

O study thy misery till thy heart cry out for Christ as earnestly as ever a drowning man did for a boat, or the wounded for a surgeon. Men must come to see the danger and feel the smart of their deadly sores and sickness, or else Christ will be to them a physician of

no value. Then the manslayer hastens to the city of refuge when pursued by the avenger of blood. Men must be even forced and driven out of themselves, or else they will not come to Christ. It was distress and extremity that made the prodigal think of returning. While Laodicea thinks herself rich, increased in goods, in need of nothing, there is little hope. She must be deeply convinced of her wretchedness, blindness, poverty, and nakedness, before she will come to Christ for his gold, raiment, and eye-salve. Therefore hold the eyes of conscience open, amplify thy misery as much as possible, do not flee the sight of it, for fear it should fill thee with terror. The sense of thy misery is but as it were the suppuration of the wound, which is necessary to the cure. Better now to fear the torments that abide thee, than to feel them hereafter.

IX. Settle it upon thy heart that thou must look out of thyself and away from thy own doings for help.

Never think thy praying, reading, hearing, confessing, or amending will do the cure; these must be attended to, but thou art undone if thou rest in them; thou art a lost man if thou hope to escape drowning on any other plank but Jesus Christ. Thou must unlearn thyself, and renounce thine own wisdom, thine own righteousness, thine own strength, and throw thyself wholly upon Christ, as a man that swims casts himself upon the water, or else thou canst not escape. While men trust in themselves, and establish their own righteousness, and have confidence in the flesh, they will not come savingly to Christ. Thou must know thy gain to be but loss and dung, thy strength but weakness, thy righteousness rags and rottenness, before there will be an effectual closure between Christ and thee. Can the lifeless corpse shake off its grave-

clothes, and loose the bands of death? Then mayest thou recover thyself, who art dead in trespasses and sins, and under an impossibility of serving thy Maker acceptably in this condition. Therefore, when thou goest to pray or meditate, or to do any of the duties to which thou art here directed, go out of thyself, call in the help of the Spirit, as despairing to do any thing pleasing to God in thine own strength; yet neglect not duty, put thyself in the way of the Spirit. While the eunuch was reading, then the Holy Ghost did send Philip to him. When the disciples were praying, when Cornelius and his friends were hearing, then the Holy Ghost fell upon them and filled them all.

X. Forthwith renounce all thy sins.

If, on the contrary, thou yield thyself to the practice of any sin, thou art undone. In vain dost thou hope for life by Christ, except thou depart from iniquity. Forsake thy sins, or else thou canst not find mercy. Thou canst not be married to Christ except divorced from sin. Give up the traitor, or you can have no peace in heaven. Cast the head of Sheba over the wall: keep not Delilah in thy lap. Thou must part with thy sins or with thy soul; spare but one sin and God will not spare thee. Never make excuses; thy sins must die, or thou must die for them. If thou allow of one sin, though but a little, a secret one—though thou mayest plead necessity, and have a hundred shifts and excuses for it, the life of thy soul must go for the life of that sin. And will it not be dearly bought?

O sinner! hear and consider: if thou wilt part with thy sins God will give thee his Christ. Is not this a fair exchange? I testify unto you this day, that if you perish, it is not because there was never a Savior provided nor life tendered, but because you prefer (with

the Jew) the murderer before the Savior, sin before Christ, "and love darkness rather than light." Search thy heart therefore with candles, as the Jews did their houses for leaven before the passover. Labor to find out thy sins; enter into thy closet, and consider, What evil have I lived in? what duty have I neglected toward God? what sin have I lived in against my brother? And now strike the darts through the heart of thy sin, as Joab did through Absalom's. Never stand looking upon thy sins, nor rolling the morsel under thy tongue, but cast it out as poison, with fear and detestation. Alas! what will thy sins do for thee, that thou shouldst hesitate to part with them? They will flatter thee, but they will undo thee and poison thee while they please thee, and arm the justice and wrath of the infinite God against thee. They will open hell for thee, and pile up fuel to burn thee. Behold the gibbet that they have prepared for thee! O serve them like Haman, and do upon them the execution they would else have done upon thee. Away with them, crucify them, and let Christ only be Lord over thee.

XI. Make a solemn choice of God for thy portion and blessedness.

With all possible devotion and veneration avouch the Lord for thy God: set the world, with all its glory, and paint, and gallantry, with all its pleasures and promotions, on the one hand; and set God with all his infinite excellences and perfections on the other; and see that thou do deliberately make thy choice. Take up thy rest in God. Sit thee down under his shadow. Let his promises and perfections turn the scale against all the world. Settle it upon thy heart, that the Lord is an all-sufficient portion, that thou canst not be miserable while thou hast God to live upon.

Take him for thy shield and exceeding great reward. God alone is more than all the world ; content thyself with him. Let others possess the preferments and glory of the world ; place thou thy happiness in the favor of God, and in the light of his countenance.

Poor sinner ! thou hast fallen off from God, and hast engaged his power and wrath against thee ; yet know, that of his abundant grace he doth offer to be thy God again in Christ. What sayest thou, man ? wilt thou have the Lord for thy God ? Why, take this counsel, and thou shalt have him ; come to him by his Christ, renounce the idols of thy pleasures, gain, and reputation, let these be pulled out of their throne, and set God's interest uppermost in thy heart. Take him as God, to be chief in thy affections, estimations, and purposes ; for he will not endure to have any set above him. In a word, thou must take him in all his personal relations and in all his essential perfections.

1. In all his personal relations. God the Father must be taken for thy father. O come to him with the prodigal ! " Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am not worthy to be called thy son ;" but since, of thy wonderful mercy, thou art pleased to take me, that am of myself most vile, even a beast and no man before thee, to be a child, I solemnly take thee for my Father, commend myself to thy care, and trust to thy providence, and cast my burden on thy shoulders. I depend on thy provision, and submit to thy corrections, and trust under the shadow of thy wings, and hide in thy chambers, and flee to thy name. I renounce all confidence in myself ; I repose my confidence in thee ; I declare my engagement with thee ; I will be for thee, and not for another. Again, God the Son must be taken for thy

Savior, thy Redeemer, and thy righteousness. He must be accepted, as the only way to the Father, and the only means of life. O then put off the raiment of thy captivity, put on the wedding garment, and go and marry thyself to Christ. 'Lord, I am thine, and all I have, my body, soul, and estate. I give my heart to thee; I will be thine undividedly, thine everlastingly. I will set thy name on all I have, and use it only as thy goods, during thy leave, resigning all to thee. I will have no king but thee to reign over me. Other lords have had the dominion over me: but now I will make mention of thy name only, and do here take an oath of fealty to thee, promising to serve and fear thee above all competitors. I disavow mine own righteousness, and despair of ever being pardoned and saved for my own duties or graces, and lean solely on thy all-sufficient sacrifice and intercession for pardon, and life, and acceptance before God. I take thee for my only guide and instructor, resolving to be directed by thee, and to wait for thy counsel; for thine shall be the casting voice with me.' Lastly, God the Spirit must be taken for thy sanctifier, for thy advocate, thy counsellor, thy comforter, the teacher of thy ignorance, the pledge and earnest of thy inheritance. "Awake thou north wind, and come, thou south, and blow upon my garden." "Come, thou Spirit of the Most High; here is a temple for thee; here do thou rest for ever; dwell here; lo, I give up the possession to thee, full possession; I send thee the keys of my heart, that all may be thine. I give up the use of all to thee, that every faculty and every member may be thy instrument to work righteousness and do the will of my Father who is in heaven.

2. In all his essential perfections . Consider how the

Lord hath revealed himself to you in his word. Will you take him as such a God? O, sinner, here is the most blessed news that ever came to the sons of men: "The Lord will be thy God," if thou wilt but close with him in his excellencies. Wilt thou have the merciful, the gracious, the sin-pardoning God to be thy God? "O yes," saith the sinner, "I am undone else." But the Father tells thee, I am the holy and sin-hating God; if thou wilt be owned as one of my people, thou must be holy—holy in heart, holy in life; thou must put away all thy iniquities, be they ever so dear, ever so natural, ever so necessary to the maintaining thy fleshly interest. Unless thou wilt be at enmity with sin, I cannot be thy God. Cast out the leaven. "Put away the evil of thy doings; cease to do evil; learn to do well;" else I can have nothing to do with thee. Bring forth mine enemies, or there is no peace to be had with me. What doth thine heart answer? "Lord, I desire to have thee as such a God; I desire to be holy as thou art holy, and to be made partaker of thy holiness. I love thee, not only for thy goodness and mercy, but for thy holiness and purity. I take thy holiness for my happiness: O be to me a fountain of holiness; set on me the stamp and impress of thy holiness: I will thankfully part with all my sins at thy command. My wilful sins I do forthwith forsake; and for mine infirmities that cleave unto me, though I would be rid of them, I will strive against them continually: I detest them, and will pray against them, and never let them have quiet rest in my soul." Beloved, whoever of you will thus accept of the Lord for his God, shall have him.

Again, he tells you, "I am the all-sufficient God." Will you lay all at my feet, give up all to my disposal,

and take me for your only portion? Will you own and honor my all-sufficiency? Will you take me as your happiness and treasure, your hope and bliss? I am a sun and a shield all in one; will you have me for your all? Now what dost thou say to this? Doth thy soul long for the onions and flesh-pots of Egypt? Art thou loth to change thy earthly happiness for a portion in God? and though thou wouldst be glad to have God and the world too, yet canst thou not think of having him, and nothing but him; but hadst rather take up with the earth below, if God would but let thee keep it as long as thou wouldst? This is a fearful sign. But now, if thou art willing to sell all for the pearl of great price; if thine heart answer, "Lord, I desire no other portion but thee; take the corn, and the wine, and the oil whoso will, so I may have the light of thy countenance; I fix upon thee for my happiness; I gladly venture myself on thee, and trust myself with thee; I set my hope in thee; I take up my rest with thee; let me hear thee say, I am thy God, thy salvation, and I have enough, all I wish for; I will make no terms with thee but for thyself; let me but have thee sure; let me be able to make my claim and see my title to thyself; and for other things, I leave them to thee; give me more or less, any thing or nothing, I will be satisfied in my God." Take him thus, and he is thy own.

Again, he tells you, I am the sovereign Lord; if you will have me for your God you must give me the supremacy. I will not be an underling; you must not make me a second to sin or any worldly interest. If you will be my people I must have the rule over you; you must not live at your own choice. Will you come under my yoke? Will you bow to my government?

Will you submit to my discipline, to my word, to my rod? Sinner, what sayest thou to this? "Lord, I had rather be at thy command than live at my own will; I had rather have thy will to be done than mine; I approve of and consent to thy laws, and account it my privilege to lie under them. And though the flesh rebel, and often break its bounds, I have resolved to take no other Lord but thee. I willingly take the oath of thy supremacy, and acknowledge thee for my Sovereign, and resolve all my days to pay the tribute of worship, obedience, love and service to thee, and to live to thee to the end of my life." This is a right acceptance of God.

To be short, he tells you, I am the true and faithful God. If you will have me for your God you must be content to trust me. Will you venture yourselves upon my word, and depend on my faithfulness, and take my bond for your security? Will you be content to follow me in poverty, and reproach, and affliction here; and to see much going out and little coming in; and to tarry till the next world for your preferment? I deal much upon trust. Will you be content to labor and suffer, and to tarry for your returns till the resurrection of the just? My promise will not always be instantly fulfilled; will you have the patience to wait? Now, what say you to this? Will you have this God for your God? Will you be content to live by faith, and trust him for an unseen happiness, an unseen heaven, an unseen glory? Do your hearts answer, "Lord, we will venture ourselves upon thee; we commit ourselves to thee; we cast ourselves upon thee; we know whom we have trusted; we are willing to take thy word; we will prefer thy promises before our own possessions, and the hopes of heaven before all the en-

joyments of the earth; we will do thy pleasure—what thou wilt here, so that we may have but thy faithful promise for heaven hereafter.” If you can in truth, and upon deliberation, thus accept of God, he will be yours. Thus there must be, in a right conversion to God, a closing with him suitable to his excellences. But when men close with his mercy, but yet love sin, hating holiness and purity; or will take him for their benefactor, but not for their sovereign; or for their patron, and not for their portion; this is no thorough and sound conversion.

XII. Accept of the Lord Jesus in all his offices, as thine.

Upon these terms Christ may be had. Sinner, thou hast undone thyself, and art plunged into the ditch of most deplorable misery, out of which thou art never able to climb up; but Jesus Christ is able and ready to help thee, and he freely tenders himself to thee. Be thy sins ever so many, ever so great, or of ever so long continuance, yet thou shalt be most certainly pardoned and saved, if thou dost not wretchedly neglect the offer that in the name of God is here made to thee. The Lord Jesus calleth thee to look to him and be saved. “Come unto him, and he will in no wise cast thee out.” Yea, he beseecheth thee to be reconciled. He crieth in the streets; he knocketh at thy door; he inviteth thee to accept of him, and live with him. If thou diest, it is because thou wouldst not come to him for life.

Now accept of an offered Christ, and thou art made for ever; now give thy consent to him, and the match is made; all the world cannot hinder it. Do not stand off because of thy unworthiness. Man, I tell thee, nothing in the world can undo thee but thy unwilling-

ness. Speak, man; art thou desirous of the honor? Wilt thou have Christ in all his relations to be thine, thy king, thy priest, thy prophet? Wilt thou have him with all the inconveniences? Take not Christ without consideration, but sit down first and count the cost. Wilt thou lay all at his feet? Wilt thou be content to run all hazards with him? Wilt thou take thy lot with him, fall where it will? Wilt thou "deny thyself, take up thy cross and follow him?" Art thou deliberately, understandingly, freely determined to cleave to him, in all times and conditions? If so, thou shalt never perish, but art passed from death unto life. Here lies the main point of thy salvation, that thou be found in thy covenant-closure with Jesus Christ; and therefore, if thou love thyself, see that thou be faithful to God and thy soul here.

XIII. Resign up all thy powers and faculties, and thy whole interest to be his.

"They gave their own selves unto the Lord." "Present your bodies a living sacrifice." The Lord seeks not yours, but you; resign therefore thy body, with all its members, to him; and thy soul, with all its powers, that he may be glorified in thy body and in thy spirit, which are his.

In a right closing with Christ all thy faculties give themselves up to him. Thy judgment says, "Lord, thou art worthy of all acceptation, chief of ten thousand: happy is the man that finds thee. All the things that are to be desired are not to be compared with thee." Prov. 3: 13-15. The understanding lays aside its corrupt reasonings and cavils, and its prejudices against Christ and his ways. It is now past questioning, and carries it for Christ against all the world. It concludes it is "good to be here," and sees such a trea-

sure in this field, such a value in this pearl, as is worth all. Matt. 13 : 44-46. "O! here is the richest bargain that ever I made; here is the richest prize that ever man was offered; here is the most sovereign remedy that ever mercy prepared; he is worthy of my esteem, worthy of my choice, worthy of my love, worthy to be embraced, adored, admired, for evermore. Rev. 5 : 12. I approve of his articles: his terms are righteous and reasonable, full of equity and mercy." Again, the will resigns. It stands no longer wavering, nor wishing, but is peremptorily determined: "Lord, thy love hath overcome me, thou hast won me, and thou shalt have me. Come in, Lord; to thee I freely open; I consent to be saved in thine own way. Thou shalt have any thing—nay, have all, let me have but thee." The memory gives up to Christ: "Lord, here is a storehouse for thee; out with this trash; lay in the treasure; let me be a repository of thy truth, thy promises, thy providences." The conscience comes in: "Lord, I will ever side with thee: I will be thy faithful registrar: I will warn when the sinner is tempted, and smite when thou art offended; I will witness for thee, and judge for thee, and guide into thy ways, and will never let sin have quiet in this soul." The affections also come in to Christ: O, saith Love, "I am sick for thee: O, saith Desire, now I have my longing; here is the satisfaction I sought for; here is the desire of nations; here is bread for me, and balm for me: all that I want." Fear bows the knee with awe and veneration: "Welcome, Lord, to thee will I pay my homage: thy word and rod shall command my motions; thee will I reverence and adore; before thee will I fall down and worship." Grief likewise puts in: "Lord, thy displeasure and thy dishonor thy people's calamities and

my own iniquities shall be what shall set me at work. I will mourn when thou art offended; I will weep when thy cause is wounded." Anger likewise comes in for Christ: "Lord, nothing so enrages me as my folly against thee, that I should be so besotted and bewitched as to hearken to the flatteries of sin and the temptations of Satan against thee." Hatred too will side with Christ: "I protest mortal enmity with thine enemies, that I never will be a friend to thy foes; I vow an eternal quarrel with every sin: I will give no quarter; I will make no peace." Thus let all thy powers yield to Jesus Christ.

Again, thou must give up thy whole interest to him. If there be any thing that thou keepest back from Christ, it will be thy undoing. Luke, 14 : 33. Unless thou wilt forsake all, (in preparation and resolution of thy heart,) thou canst not be his disciple. Thou must hate father and mother, yea, and thine own life also, in comparison with him, and as far as it stands in competition with him. In a word, thou must give him thyself, and all that thou hast, without reservation, or else thou canst have no part in him.

XIV. "Make choice of the laws of Christ as the rule of thy words, thoughts, and actions." This is the true convert's choice. But here remember these three rules:—1. You must choose them all, there is no getting to heaven by a partial obedience. None may think it enough to take up with the cheap and easy part of religion, and let alone the duties that are costly and self-denying, and oppose the interests of the flesh; you must take all or none. A sincere convert, though he makes most conscience of the greatest sins and weightiest duties, yet he makes true conscience of little

sins and of all duties. 2. You must choose Christ's laws for all times, for prosperity and adversity, whether it rain or shine. A true convert is resolved in his course; he will stand to his choice, and will not set his back to the wind, and be of the religion of the times. "I have stuck to thy testimonies; I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes always, even to the end. Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage for ever. I will have respect to thy statutes continually." 3. This must not be done carelessly, but deliberately and understandingly. The disobedient son said, "I go, sir; but he went not." How fairly did they promise, "All that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee we will do it!" And it is likely they spake as they meant. But when it came to the trial it was found that there was not such a heart in them as to do what they had promised.

If you would be sincere in closing with the laws and the ways of Christ, study the meaning, and breadth, and extent of them. Remember that they are spiritual; they reach the very thoughts and inclinations of the heart; so that, if you will walk by this rule, your very thoughts and inward motions must be under government. Again, they are very strict and self-denying, quite contrary to the grain of your natural inclinations. You must take the strait gate, the narrow way, and be content to have the flesh curbed from the liberty it desires. In a word, they are very large, for "thy commandments are exceeding broad."

Rest not in generals, for there is much deceit in them, but bring down thine heart to the particular commands of Christ. Those Jews, in the prophet, seemed as well resolved as any in the world, and called God to witness that they meant as they said: but they

stuck in generals; when God's command crosses their inclination, they will not obey. Art thou resolved, in the strength of Christ, to set upon the conscientious practice of every duty that thou findest to be there required of thee, and to set against every sin that thou findest there forbidden? This is the way to be sound in God's statutes, that thou mayest never be ashamed.

Observe the special duties that thy heart is most against, and the special sins that it is most inclined to, and see whether it be truly resolved to perform the one and forego the other. What sayest thou to thy bosom-sin, thy gainful sin? What sayest thou to costly, hazardous, and flesh-displeasing duties? If thou haltest here, and dost not resolve (by the grace of God) to cross the flesh and be in earnest, thou art unsound.

XV. "Let all this be completed in a solemn covenant between God and thy soul." For thy better help therein, take these few directions.

Set apart some time, more than once, to be spent in secret before the Lord—in seeking earnestly his special assistance and gracious acceptance of thee—in searching thy heart, whether thou art sincerely willing to forsake all thy sins, and to resign up thyself, body and soul, unto God and his service; to serve him in holiness and righteousness all the days of thy life. Compose thy spirit into the most serious frame possible, suitable to a transaction of so high importance. Lay hold on the covenant of God, and rely on his promise of giving grace and strength, whereby thou mayest be enabled to perform thy promise. Trust not to thine own strength, to the strength of thine own resolutions: but take hold on his strength.

XVI. Take heed of delaying thy conversion, but make a speedy, an immediate surrender of thy heart to God. "I made haste, and delayed not." Remember and tremble at the sad instance of the foolish virgins, that came not till the "door of mercy was shut;" and of a convinced Felix, who put off Paul to another season; and we never find that he had such another season. O come in while it is called to-day, lest thou shouldst be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin; lest the day of grace should be over, and the things which belong to thy peace should be "hidden from thine eyes." Now mercy is inviting thee; now Christ is waiting to be gracious to thee, and the Spirit of God is striving with thee; now ministers are calling; now conscience is stirring: now the market is open, and oil may be had, thou hast opportunity for buying. Now Christ is to be had, if accepted. O strike in with the offers of grace: now or never! If thou make light of this offer, God may swear in his wrath, thou shalt not taste of his supper.

A SHORT SOLILOQUY.

What meanest thou, O my soul, to go on thus? art thou in league with hell? hast thou made a covenant with death? art thou in love with thy misery? "Is it good for thee to be here?" Alas! what shall I do? shall I go on in my sinful ways? Why then, certain damnation will be my end. And shall I be so besotted as to go and sell my soul to the flames for a little ale and a little ease, for a little pleasure, or gain, or satisfaction to my flesh? Shall I linger any longer in this wretched state? No; if I tarry here I shall die. What then? Is there no help, no hope? None, except I turn. Why,

but is there any remedy for such woful misery? any mercy, after such provoking iniquity? Yes, as sure as God's oath is true I shall have pardon and mercy yet, if immediately, and unfeignedly, and unreservedly I turn by Christ to him.

Why, then, I thank thee upon my bended knees, O most merciful Jehovah! that thy patience hath waited for me hitherto; for, hadst thou taken me away in this estate, I had perished for ever. And now I adore thy grace, and accept the offers of thy mercy: I renounce all my sins, and resolve by thy grace to set myself against them, and to follow thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of my life.

Who am I, Lord, that I should make any claim unto thee, or have any part or portion in thee, who am not worthy to lick up the dust of thy feet? yet, since thou holdest forth the golden sceptre, I am bold to come and touch. To despair, would be to disparage thy mercy; and to stand off when thou biddest me to come, would be at once to ruin myself and rebel against thee, under the pretence of humility. Therefore I bow my soul to thee, and with all possible thankfulness accept thee as mine, and give up myself to thee as thine. Thou shalt be Sovereign over me, "my King and my God:" thou shalt be on the throne, and all my powers shall bow to thee; they shall come and worship before thy feet. Thou shalt be my portion, O Lord, and I will rest in thee.

Thou callest for my heart. O that it were any way fit for thine acceptance! I am unworthy, O Lord, everlastingly unworthy to be thine; but since thou wilt have it so, I freely give up my heart to thee: take it: it is thine: O that it were better! But, Lord, I put it into thine hand, who alone canst mend it: mold it

after thine own heart ; make it as thou wouldst have it, holy, humble, heavenly, soft, tender, flexible ; and write thy law upon it.

“ Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly ;” enter in triumphantly ! take me up to thee for ever : I give up myself to thee ; I come to thee as the only way to the Father, as the only Mediator, the means ordained to bring me to God. I have destroyed myself, but in thee is my help ; save, Lord, or else I perish !” I come to thee worthy to die and to be damned. Never was the hire more due to the servant, never was penny more due to the laborer, than death and hell (my just wages) are due to me for my sins. But I flee to thy merits ; I trust alone to the value and virtue of thy sacrifice, and the prevalence of thy intercession. I submit to thy teaching ; I make choice of thy government. “ Stand open, ye everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in.”

O thou Spirit of the Most High, the comforter and sanctifier of thy chosen ! come in with all thy glorious train, all thy courtly attendants, thy fruits and graces ; let me be thine habitation ; I can give thee only what is thine own already ; but here, with the poor widow, I cast my two mites, my soul and my body, into thy treasury, fully resigning them up to thee, to be sanctified by thee, to be servants to thee. They shall be thy patients ; cure thou their malady. They shall be thy subjects ; govern thou their motions. Too long have I served the world ; too long have I hearkened to Satan ; but now I renounce them all, and will be ruled by thy dictates and directions, and guided by thy counsel.

O blessed Trinity ! O glorious Unity ! I deliver up myself to thee : receive me ; write thy name, O Lord,

upon me, and upon all that I have, as thy property; set thy mark upon me, upon every member of my body, and on every faculty of my soul. I have chosen thy precepts; thy law will I keep in mine eye, and study to follow. According to this rule do I resolve, through thy grace, to walk; after this law shall my whole man be governed; and though I shall come short in all thy commandments, yet I will allow myself in the breach of none. I know my flesh will hang back; but I resolve, in the power of thy grace, to cleave to thee and thy holy ways, whatever it costs me. I am sure I cannot come off a loser by thee, and therefore I will be content with reproach, and difficulties, and hardships here; and will "deny myself, and take up my cross, and follow thee." Lord Jesus, thy yoke is easy, thy cross is welcome: as it is the way to thee, I lay aside all hopes of worldly happiness; I will be content to tarry till I come to thee. Let me be poor, and low, and despised here, so I may but be admitted to live and reign with thee hereafter. Lord, thou hast my heart and hand to this agreement: be it as the laws of the Medes and Persians, never to be reversed. To this will I stand; in this resolution, through grace, I will live and die; "I have sworn," and will perform it, that "I will keep thy righteous judgments;" I have given my free consent; I have made my everlasting choice: Lord Jesus, confirm the contract. Amen.

CHAPTER VII.

CONTAINING THE MOTIVES TO CONVERSION.

Though what is already said of the "necessity of conversion," and of the "miseries of the unconverted,"

might be sufficient to induce any considerate mind to resolve upon a present turning unto God; yet, knowing what a piece of desperate obstinacy and untractableness the heart of man naturally is, and thinking it therefore possible, after all that I have said, some might still refuse their whole selves to the Lord, I have added the following motives.

Lord, fail me not now, at my last attempts. If any soul hath read hitherto, and is yet untouched, now, Lord, fasten on him, and do thy work; now take him by the heart, overcome him, persuade him, till he say, Thou hast prevailed, for thou art stronger than I. Lord, didst not thou make me a fisher of men, and have I toiled all this while and caught nothing? Alas! that I should have spent my strength for naught! and now I am casting my last; Lord Jesus, stand thou upon the shore, and direct how and where I shall spread my net; and let me so enclose with arguments the souls I seek, that they may not be able to get out. Now, Lord, for a multitude of souls! now for a full draught! O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me this once, O God.

But I turn me unto you.

Men and brethren, heaven and earth call upon you; yea, hell itself preaches the doctrine of repentance unto you; the ministers of the churches labor for you. The angels of heaven wait for you, for your repenting and turning unto God. O sinner, why should the devils make merry with thee? why shouldst thou be a morsel for that devouring leviathan? why should harpies and hell-hounds tear thee, and make a feast upon thee; and when they have got thee into the snare, and have fastened their talons in thee, laugh at thy destruction, and deride thy misery, and sport themselves

with thy ruinous folly? This will be thy case, except thou turn: And were it not better thou shouldst be a joy to angels, than a laughing-stock and sport for devils? Verily, if thou wouldst but come in, the heavenly hosts would take up their anthems and sing, "Glory be to God in the highest;" the morning stars would sing together, and all the sons of God shout for joy, and celebrate this new creation as they did the first. Thy repentance would, as it were, make a holiday in heaven, and the glorious spirits would rejoice, in that there is a new brother added to their society, another heir born to the Lord, and the lost son received safe and sound. The true penitent's tears are indeed the wine that maketh glad both God and man.

If it be little that men and angels would rejoice at thy conversion, know thou that God himself would rejoice over thee, even with singing, and rest in his love. Never did Jacob with such joy weep over the neck of his Joseph, as thy heavenly Father would rejoice over thee upon thy coming to him. Look over the story of the prodigal. Methinks I see how the aged father lays aside his state and forgetteth his years; behold how he runneth! O the haste that mercy makes! the sinner makes not half that speed. Methinks I see how his bowels move, how his compassions yearn. How quick sighted is love! Methinks I hear the music at a distance. O the melody of the heavenly choristers! I cannot learn the song, Rev. 14:3, but methinks I overhear the burden, at which all the harmonious choir with one consent strike sweetly in, being none other than, "For this my son was dead; and is alive again; was lost, and is found." I need not farther explain the parable: God is the father; Christ is the provision; his righteousness the robe; his grace the ornaments; min-

isters, saints and angels the friends and servants; and thou that readest (if thou wilt but unfeignedly repent and turn) the welcome prodigal, the happy instance of this grace, and blessed subject of this joy and love!

O rock! O adamant!—what! not moved yet! not yet resolved to turn forthwith and to close with mercy! I will try thee yet once again; if one were sent to thee from the dead, wouldst thou be persuaded? Why, hear the voice from the dead, from the damned, crying to thee that thou shouldst repent: “I pray thee that thou wouldst send him to my father’s house, (for I have five brethren,) that he may testify to them, lest they also come into this place of torment: if one went to them from the dead, they will repent.” Hear, O man! thy predecessors in impenitence preach to thee from the infernal world, from the flames, from the rack, that thou shouldst repent. O look but down into the bottomless pit; seest thou how the smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever and ever! What thinkest thou of those chains of darkness? Canst thou be content to burn? Seest thou how the worm gnaweth, how the fire rageth? What sayest thou to that gulf of perdition? wilt thou take up thine habitation there? O lay thine ear to the door of hell: hearest thou the curses and blasphemies, the weepings and wailings, how they lament their follies and curse their day? How do they roar and gnash their teeth! how deep their groans! how inconceivable their miseries! if the shrieks of Korah, Dathan and Abiram were so terrible (when the earth clave asunder, and opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and all that appertained to them) that all Israel fled at the cry of them, O how fearful would the cry be, if God should take off the covering from the mouth of hell, and let the cry of the damned ascend

in all its terror among the children of men! and of all their moans and miseries this is the piercing, killing emphasis and burden, "for ever! for ever!"

Why, as God liveth that made thy soul, thou art but a few hours distant from all this, except thou "repent and be converted."

O, I am even lost and swallowed up in the abundance of those arguments that I might suggest. If there be any point of wisdom in all the world, it is to repent and come in. If there be any thing righteous, any thing reasonable, this is it. If there be any thing in the world that may be called madness and folly, and any thing that may be counted sottish, absurd, brutish, and unreasonable, it is this, "to go on in thine unconverted state." Let me beg of thee, as thou wouldst not willingly destroy thyself, to sit down and weigh, beside what has been said, these following motives, and let conscience say if it be not most reasonable that thou shouldst "repent and turn."

I. The God that made thee, most graciously invites thee.

His most sweet and merciful nature invites thee. O the kindness of God, his boundless compassion, his tender mercies! As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts. "He is full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy." This is a great argument to persuade sinners to come in, "Turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil."

If God would not repent of the evil, it would be some discouragement against our repenting. If there

were no hope of mercy, it would be no wonder that rebels should stand out; but never had subjects such a gracious prince, such pity, patience, and clemency to deal with, as you have. "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity?" Micah, 7: 18. O sinners! see what a God you have to deal with: if you will but turn, "he will turn again, and have compassion on you; he will subdue your iniquities, and cast all your sins into the depths of the sea." "Return unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will return unto you." Sinners do not fail in that they have too high thoughts of God's mercies, but in that, 1. They overlook his justice. 2. They promise themselves mercy out of God's way. His mercy is beyond all imagination; great mercies, manifold mercies, Neh. 9: 19, tender mercies, sure mercies, everlasting mercies; and all is thy own, if thou wilt but turn. Art thou willing to come in? The Lord hath laid aside his terror and erected a throne of grace. He holds forth the golden sceptre: touch and live. Would a merciful man slay his enemy when prostrate at his feet, acknowledging his wrong, begging pardon, and offering to enter with him into a covenant of peace? Much less will the merciful God. Study his name.

His soul-encouraging call and promises invite thee. Ah, what an earnest suitor is mercy to thee! how lovingly, how instantly, it calleth after thee! how earnestly it woeth thee! "Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause my anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever; only acknowledge thine iniquity. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; return, and I will heal thy backslidings. Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return unto

me, saith the Lord." "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" "If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All the transgressions that he hath committed they shall not be mentioned unto him; in his righteousness that he hath done, he shall live. Repent, and turn you from all your transgressions: so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? for I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."

O melting, gracious words! the voice of God, and not of a man! This is not the manner of men, for the offended sovereign to sue to the offending traitorous rebel. O how doth mercy follow thee, and plead with thee! Is not thy heart broken yet? O that "to-day you would hear his voice!"

II. The doors of heaven are thrown open to thee, the everlasting gates are set wide for thee, and an abundant entrance into the kingdom of heaven is administered to thee.

Christ now addresses thee, and calls upon thee to arise and take possession of this good land. View the glory of the other world, as set forth in the map of the Gospel; get thee up into Pisgah of the promises, and lift up thine eyes northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, and that goodly mountain; behold the

Paradise of God, watered with the streams of glory. Arise and walk through the land, in the length of it, and in the breadth of it; for the land which thou seest, the Lord will give it to thee for ever, if thou wilt but return. Let me say to thee, as Paul to Agrippa, "Believest thou the prophets?" If thou believest indeed, do but view what glorious things are spoken of the city of God, and know that all this is here tendered in the name of God to thee. As verily as God is true, it shall be for ever thine, if thou wilt but thoroughly turn.

Behold the city of pure transparent gold, whose foundations are garnished with all manner of precious stones, whose gates are pearls, whose light is glory, whose temple is God. Believest thou this? if thou dost, art thou not worse than insane, that wilt not take possession when the gates are thrown open to thee, and thou art bid to enter? O ye sons of folly, will ye embrace the dunghill and refuse the kingdom? Behold, the Lord takes you up into the mountain, shows you the kingdom of heaven and all the glory thereof, and tells you, All this will I give you, if you will but return unto me; if you will submit to mercy, accept my Son, and serve me in righteousness and holiness. "O fools, and slow of heart to believe!" Will you seek and serve the world, and neglect eternal glory? What! not enter into Paradise when the flaming sword, which was once set to keep you out, is now used to drive you in! But you will say I am uncharitable, to think you infidels and unbelievers. Why, what shall I think of you? Either you are desperate unbelievers, that do not credit it, or insane, that you know and believe the excellence and eternity of this glory, and yet do so fearfully neglect it. Surely you have either no faith or no reason, and I had almost said conscience shall tell you so before I leave you.

Do but attend to what is offered you: a blessed kingdom, a "kingdom of glory," a "kingdom of righteousness," a "kingdom of peace," and an "everlasting kingdom." Here thou shalt dwell, here thou shalt reign for ever, and the Lord shall seat thee on a throne of glory, and with his own hand shall set the royal diadem upon thine head, and give thee a crown—not of thorns, for there shall be no sinning nor suffering there—not of gold, (for this shall be viler than the dirt in that day,) but a "crown of life," a "crown of righteousness," a "crown of glory," yea, "thou shalt put on glory as a robe," and shalt "shine like the sun in the firmament, in the glory of thy Father." Look now upon thy worthless flesh. This very flesh, which is mere dust and ashes, shall be brighter than the stars. In short, thou shalt be made like unto the "angels of God," and "behold his face in righteousness." Look in now and tell me, Dost thou yet believe? if not, conscience must pronounce thee an infidel; for it is the very "word of God" that I speak.

But if thou sayest thou believest, let me next know thy resolution. Wilt thou embrace this for thy happiness? Wilt thou forego thy sinful gains, thy forbidden pleasures? Wilt thou trample on the world's esteem, and stop thy ears to its flatteries, and wrest thee out of its embraces? Wilt thou be content to take up with reproach and poverty, if they lie in the way to heaven, and follow the Lord with humble self-denial, in a mortified and flesh-displeasing life? If so, all is thine, and that for ever.

And is not the offer a fair one? Is it not just that he should be damned that will go on and perish, when all this may be had by taking it? Wilt thou take God at his word; wilt thou let go thy hold of the world,

and rid thy hands of thy sins, and lay hold on eternal life? If not, let conscience tell thee whether thou art not insane, that thou shouldst neglect so happy a choice, by which thou mightest be made happy for ever.

III. God will settle unspeakable privileges at present upon thee.

Though the full of your blessedness shall be deferred till hereafter, yet God will give you no little things in hand. He will redeem you from your thralldom. He will pluck you from the paw of the lion. The serpent shall bruise thy heel, but thou shalt bruise his head. He shall deliver you from this present evil world. Prosperity shall not destroy you; adversity shall not separate him and you.

He will redeem you from the power of the grave, and make the king of terrors a messenger of peace to you. He will take out the curse from the cross, and make affliction the refining-pot, the fan, the medicine, to blow off the chaff, purify the metal, and cleanse the mind. He will save you from the arrest of the law, and turn the curse into a blessing to you. He hath the keys of hell and of death, and shutteth and no man openeth, and he will shut its mouth, as once he did the lions', that you shall not be hurt of the second death.

Beside, he will not only save you from misery, but install you into unspeakable prerogatives. He will bestow himself upon you; he will be a friend and a father unto you. He will be a sun and a shield to you. In a word, he will be a God to you. And what can be said more? What may you expect that a God should do for you, and be to you? *that* he will be, *that* he will do. She that marries a prince expects he should do

for her like a prince, that she may live in a suitable state, and have an answerable dowry: he that hath a king for his father or a friend, expects he should do for him like a king. Alas! the kings and monarchs of the earth, so much above you, are but like the painted butterflies amongst the rest of their kind, or the fair colored palmer-worm amongst the rest of the worms, if compared with God. As he does infinitely exceed the glory and power of his glittering dust, so he will, beyond all proportion, exceed in doing for his favorites whatever princes can do for theirs. He will "give you grace and glory, and withhold no good thing from you." He will take you for his sons and daughters, and make you heirs of his promises, and establish his everlasting covenant with you. He will justify you from all that law, conscience, and Satan can charge upon you. He will give you free access into his presence, and accept your person, and receive your prayers. He will abide in you, and hold a constant and friendly communion with you. His ear shall be open, his door open, his store open, at all times to you. His blessing shall rest upon you, and he will make your enemies to serve you, and work out "all things for good unto you."

IV. The terms of mercy are brought as low as possible to you. God has stooped as low to sinners as with honor he can. He will not be an author of sin, nor stain the glory of his holiness: and how could he come lower than he has, unless he should do this?

God does not impose any thing unreasonable or impossible, as a condition of life, upon you. Two things were necessary to be done, according to the tenor of the first covenant. 1. That we should fully satisfy

the demands of justice for past offences. 2. That we should perform personally, perfectly, and perpetually, the whole law for the time to come. By our sins we render salvation through either of these ways impossible. But, behold God's gracious provision in both. He does not insist upon your satisfaction: he is content to take of the Surety (and he of his own providing too) what he might have exacted from you. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." He declares himself to have received a ransom; and that he expects nothing but that you should accept his Son, "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;" and he shall be righteousness and redemption to you; "who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness." If therefore you come in his Christ, and set your heart to please him, making this your chief concern, he will graciously accept, and even reward you, though your obedience be not perfect.

O consider the condescension of your God; let me say to you, as Naaman's servants to him, "My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much rather when he says to thee, Wash and be clean?" If God had demanded some terrible, some severe and rigorous thing of you, to escape eternal damnation, would you not have done it? Suppose it had been to spend all your days in sorrow in some howling wilderness, or to

“offer the fruit of your bodies for the sin of your souls,” would you not have thankfully accepted eternal redemption, though these had been the conditions? Nay, farther, if God should have told you that you should have burned in the fire for millions of ages, or been so long tormented in hell, would you not have gladly accepted it? Alas! all these are not so much as one grain of sand in the glass of eternity. If your offended Creator should have holden you but one year upon the rack, and then bidden you come and forsake your sins, accept Christ, and serve him a few years in self-denial, or lie in this case for ever and ever; do you think you should have hesitated at the offer, and disputed the terms, and have been unresolved whether you were to accept of the proposal? O sinner, return and live; why shouldst thou die when life is to be had for taking, when mercy seems beholden to thee (as it were) to be saved? Couldst thou say, “Lord, I knew thee, that thou wast a hard man,” even then thou wouldst have had no excuse; but when the God of heaven has stooped so low, and condescended so far, if still thou shouldst stand off, who shall plead for thee?

Object. Notwithstanding all the advantages of this new covenant, I am unable to repent and believe, and so comply with its conditions.

Ans. Dare you thus charge your impenitency and unbelief upon God? Your ability is sufficient to render it your duty to repent without delay. But let the next consideration serve for a fuller answer.

V. God doth offer all needed grace to enable you.

“I have stretched out mine hand, and no man regarded.” What though you are plunged into the ditch of that misery from which you can never get out?

Christ offereth to help you out; he reacheth out his hand to you; and if you perish, it is for refusing his help. "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man open to me I will come in." What though you are poor, and wretched, and blind, and naked? Christ offereth a cure for your blindness, a covering for your nakedness, a remedy for your poverty; he tenders you his righteousness, his grace: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed; and anoint thy eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." Do you say, The condition is impossible; for I have not wherewith to buy? You must know that this buying is "without money and without price." This buying is by begging and seeking with your whole heart. God commandeth thee to know him, and to fear him. Dost thou say, Yea, but my mind is blinded, and my heart is hardened from his fear? I answer, God doth offer to enlighten thy mind, and to teach thee this fear that is presented to thy choice. So that now, if men live in ignorance and estrangement from the Lord, it is because they will not understand and desire the knowledge of his ways. "If thou criest after knowledge, if thou seekest her as silver, &c. then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." Is not here a fair offer? "Turn ye at my reproof; behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you." Though of yourselves you can do nothing, yet you may do all through his Spirit enabling you, and he offers assistance to you. God bids you "wash and make you clean." You say you are unable, as much as the leopard to wash out his spots. Yea, but the Lord doth offer to purge you; so that if you are filthy still, it is through your own wilfulness, "I have purged thee

and thou wast not purged.” “O Jerusalem, wilt thou not be made clean? When shall it once be?” God doth invite you to be made clean, and entreat you to yield to his proposals; accept of his offers, and let him do for you, and in you, what you cannot do for yourselves.

SIX QUESTIONS TO THE UNCONVERTED.

Q. 1. *What is my state by nature?* Is it not a state of death? Eph. 2:1. A state of wrath? ver. 3. Sirs, awake, and bethink yourselves where you are, and whither you are going. While you are in your natural, unconverted, unbelieving state, all your sins are unpardoned, and the wrath of God abideth on you. Suppose you saw a poor creature hanging over a burning fiery furnace by nothing but a slender thread, like to break every moment, would not your hearts ache for such a one? Sirs, it is your very case; you hang over the infernal burnings by nothing but the small thread of your lives, while you know not but it may break the next moment, and then where are you? Is this a case for you to go on contentedly and merrily in?

Q. 2. *What condition is my soul now in?* Am I changed and renewed by conversion, or am I not? Speak, conscience; hath this man, this woman, this child, been soundly and savingly changed, both in heart and life? Where are your evidences? Can you show the marks of the Lord Jesus upon your souls? Let conscience answer. Where was the place? what were the means? when was the time that your soul was thoroughly renewed? At least, if you cannot show the time, place, or means, can you

prove the thing? Can you say with him that was born blind, One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, I now see? Sirs, be not deceived; I tell you, whatever you do, nothing will avail you to salvation, except you be new creatures.

Q. 3. *What if I should lose my soul? What sad work should I make of it then?* This is very possible; yea, it is the case of the most. There are but few of the children of men that escape safe to heaven. Sirs, beware of your danger, and fear, lest a promise being left of entering into rest, any of you should at last come short of it. Suppose a man were to travel through some perilous wood or wilderness, having but one jewel in all the world, in which his all was bound up, and should see some stand on one hand and some on the other, and hear one company in this place and another in that cry out under the hands of some cruel robbers; O, in what fear would this traveler go lest he should lose this jewel, and be robbed of all at once! Why, thou art the man; this traveler is thyself; this jewel is thy soul; this wilderness or wood is this world thou art to travel through: swarms of sins, legions of devils, and a whole world of temptations—these are the robbers that lie in wait for thy soul; and if all that these can do can keep thee out of heaven, thou shalt never enter there. O! what if thy pride or worldliness, thy delays and triflings in religion should at last betray thy soul into the robbers' hands? Other losses may be repaired; but thy soul being once lost, God is lost, Christ is lost, heaven is lost, all lost for evermore.

Q. 4. *What am I doing for my soul? What!* have I a soul, an immortal soul to care for, and look no better after it, and bestow no more of my time or

pains upon it, no more of my thoughts about it? When Augustus the emperor saw the outlandish women carrying apes and such kind of strange creatures in their arms, he asked, What! have the women in these countries no children? So it may be said of many among us, that are early and late at their worldly business, but let the care of religion lie by neglected, What! have these men no souls? Why, man! hast thou a soul, and yet dost so little in thy closet, so little in thy family, from day to day, for it? What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God, that thou perish not. What will become of thy soul if thou lookest to it only at this careless rate?

Q. 5. *What if God should this night require my soul, where would death land me?* There was one that promised himself many merry days and years, as it is likely thou dost, but that same night God called for his soul. Sirs, are you prepared? Are you fit to die? O dare not to live in such a case, nor in that course in which you would not dare to die.

Q. 6. *Should I not be in a happy case, if I had but secured my soul?* O if this were but once done, how sweetly mightest thou live! Then thou mightest eat thy bread and drink thy wine with a merry heart, when assured that God accepteth thee and thy works. Then thou mightest lie down in peace, rise up in peace, and go out in peace. Then thou mightest look death in the face, thou mightest look dangers in the face, yea, look devils in the face, and never be afraid. Go then to Christ, seek the pardon of your sins through his death, commit your soul into his hands, believe in him, and then this happiness shall be yours: but go, I beseech you, without delay.

CONCLUSION.

And now, to conclude, let me know your mind; what do you intend to do? Will you go on and die, or will you immediately turn and lay hold on eternal life? How long will ye linger in Sodom? "How long will ye halt between two opinions?" Have you not yet resolved whether Christ or Barabbas, whether bliss or torment, whether this vain and wretched world or the paradise of God be the better choice? Is it a disputable case whether the Abana and Pharpar of Damascus be better than all the streams of Eden; or whether the vile puddle of sin is to be preferred before the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb? Can the world in good earnest do that for you which Christ can? Will it stand by you to eternity? Will pleasures, land, titles and treasures descend with you? If not, had you not need look after somewhat that will? What mean you to stand wavering, to be off and on? Shall I leave you at last, like Agrippa, no further than almost persuaded? Why, you are for ever lost if left here! as good be not at all, as not altogether Christians. You are half in mind to give over your former negligent life, and set to a strict and holy course; you could wish you were as some others are, and could do as they can do. How long will you rest in idle wishes and fruitless purposes? When will you come to a fixed, firm, and full resolve? Do not you see how Satan cheats you by tempting you to delays? How long hath he drawn you on in the way of perdition? How many years have you been purposing to mend? What if God should have taken you off all this while.

Well, put me not off with a dilatory answer; tell me not of hereafter; I must have your immediate consent; if you be not now resolved, while the Lord is treating with you and inviting you, much less are you like to be hereafter, when these impressions are worn out, and you are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Will you give me your hand? Will you set open the door and give the Lord Jesus the full and ready possession? Will you put your name unto his covenant? What do you resolve upon? If you still delay, my labor is lost, and all is likely to come to nothing. Come, cast in your lot; make your choice. "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation: to-day, if you will hear his voice." Why should not this be the day whence thou shouldst be able to date thy happiness? Why shouldst thou venture a day longer in this dangerous and dreadful condition? What if God should this night require thy soul? "O that thou mightest know in this thy day the things that belong to thy peace, before they be hid from thine eyes!" This is thy day, and it is but a day. Others have had their day, and have received their doom and now art thou brought upon the stage of this world, here to act thy part for the whole of eternity. Remember thou art now upon thy good behavior for everlasting; if thou make not a wise choice now, thou art undone for ever. Look what thy present choice is; such must thine eternal condition be.

And is it true indeed? Are life and death at thy choice? Why then, what hinders but that thou shouldst be happy? Nothing doth or can hinder but thine own willful neglect or refusal. It was the remark of the eunuch to Philip: "See, here is water; what

doth hinder me to be baptized?" So I may say to thee, See, here is Christ, here is mercy, pardon, life; what hinders but that thou shouldst be pardoned and saved? One of the martyrs, as he was praying at the stake, had his pardon set by him in a box, which indeed he refused rightly, because upon unworthy terms; but here the terms are most honorable and easy. O sinner! wilt thou burn with thy pardon by thee? do but forthwith give up thy consent to Christ to renounce thy sins, deny thyself, take up the yoke and the cross and thou carriest the day; Christ is thine; pardon, peace, life, blessedness are all thine. And is not this an offer worth embracing? Why shouldst thou hesitate or doubtfully dispute about the case? Is it not past controversy whether God be better than sin, and glory than vanity? Why shouldst thou forsake thy own mercy, and sin against thy own life? When wilt thou shake off thy sloth, and lay by thine excuses? "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, thou knowest not" where this night may lodge thee.

Now the Holy Spirit is striving with you; he will not always strive. Hast thou not felt thine heart aroused by the word, and been almost persuaded to leave off thy sins and come to Christ? Hast thou not felt some motions in thy mind, wherein thou hast been warned of thy danger, and told what thy careless course would end in? It may be thou art like young Samuel, who, when the Lord called once and again, knew not the voice of the Lord; but these motions and desires are the offers, and essays, and callings, and strivings of the Spirit. O take advantage of the tide, and know the day of thy visitation.

Now the Lord Jesus stretcheth wide his arms to receive you; he beseecheth you by us. How movingly,

how meltingly, how compassionately he calleth ! the church is put into a sudden ecstasy at the sound of his voice, "the voice of my beloved." O wilt thou turn a deaf ear to his voice ? Is it not the voice that breaketh the cedars, and maketh the mountains to skip like a calf ? that shaketh the wilderness, and divideth the flames of fire ? It is not Sinai's thunder, but a soft and still voice. It is not the voice of Mount Ebal, a voice of cursing and terror, but the voice of Mount Gerizim, the voice of blessing and glad tidings of good things. It is not the voice of the trumpet nor the voice of war, but a message of peace from the King of peace. I may say to thee, O sinner, as Martha to her sister, "The Master is come, and he calleth for thee," Now then, with Mary, arise quickly and come unto him. How sweet are his invitations ! He crieth in the open concourse, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." How bountiful is he ! He excludeth none. "Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely." "Whoso is wise, let him turn in hither. Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine that I have mingled. Forsake the foolish and live." "Come unto me, take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest to your souls." "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." How doth he bemoan the obstinate refuser ! "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ! how often would I have gathered thy children as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not !" "Behold me, behold me ! I have stretched out my hands all the day to a rebellious people." O be persuaded now at last to throw yourselves into the arms of his love.

Behold, O ye sons of men, the Lord Jesus hath

thrown open the prison, and now he cometh to you by his ministers, and beseecheth you to come out. If it were from a palace or paradise that Christ did call you, it were no wonder that you were unwilling; (and yet how easily was Adam tempted thence!) but it is from your prison, from your chains, from the dungeon, from the darkness, that he calleth you, and yet will you not come? He calls you unto liberty, and yet will you not hearken? His yoke is easy, his laws are liberty, his service is freedom, and (whatever prejudice you have against his ways) if God may be believed, you shall find them all pleasure and peace, and shall taste sweetness and joy unutterable, and take infinite delight and felicity in them.

Sinners, I cannot tell how to give you over. I am now ready to close, but I would see a covenant made between Christ and you before I end. What! shall I leave you at last as I found you? Have you read hitherto, and not yet resolved immediately to abandon all your sins and to close with Jesus Christ? Alas! what shall I say? what shall I do? Will you turn off all my importunity? Have I run in vain? Have I used so many arguments, and spent so much time to persuade you, and must I sit down at last in disappointment? But it is a small matter that you turn me off; you put a slight upon the God that made you; you reject the compassion and beseechings of a Savior, and will be found resisters of the Holy Ghost, if you will not now be prevailed upon to repent and be converted.

Well, though I have called you long, and you have refused, I shall yet this once more lift up my voice like a trumpet, and cry from the highest places of the city before I conclude with a miserable exclamation

“All is over !” Once more I shall call after regardless sinners, that (if it be possible) I may awaken them : “ O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord.” Unless you be resolved to die, lend your ears to the last calls of mercy. Behold, in the name of God I make open proclamation unto you : “ Harken unto me, O ye children ; hear instruction and be wise, and refuse it not.”

“ Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters ; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not ? Harken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto me ; hear, and your soul shall live ; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.”

Ho, every one that is sick of any manner of disease or torment, or is possessed with an evil spirit, whether of pride, fury, lust, or covetousness, come ye to the Physician, bring away your sick ; lo, here is he that healeth all manner of sicknesses, and all manner of diseases, among the people.

Ho, every one that is under conviction, and every one that is in distress, and every one that is discontented with himself, gather yourselves unto Christ, and he will become a Captain over you. He will be your protection from the arrests of the law ; he will save you from the hand of divine justice. Behold, he is an open sanctuary to you : he is a known refuge. Away with your sins and come in unto him, lest the avenger of blood seize you, lest devouring wrath overtake you.

Ho, every blind and ignorant sinner, come and buy eye-salve, that thou mayest see. Away with thy excuses ! thou art for ever lost if thou continue in this state. But accept Christ for thy Prophet, and he will be a light unto thee. Cry unto him for knowledge, study his word, take pains about religion, humble thyself before God, and he will teach thee his way, and make thee wise unto salvation. But if thou wilt not follow him, but sit down because thou hast but one talent, he will condemn thee for a wicked and slothful servant.

Ho, every profane sinner, come in and live. Return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on thee ; be entreated. O return, come. Thou that hast filled thy mouth with oaths and execrations, all manner of sins and blasphemies shall be forgiven thee, if thou wilt but thoroughly turn unto Christ and come in. O unclean sinner, put away thy whoredoms out of thy sight, and thy adulteries from between thy breasts, and give up thyself unto Christ, as a vessel of holiness, alone for his use ; and then, "Though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow ; and though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Hear, O ye drunkards, how long will ye be drunken ? Put away your wine. Though you have rolled in the filthiness of your sin, take the cup of repentance and heartily renounce your beloved lust, and the Lord will receive you. Give up yourselves unto Christ, to live soberly, righteously and godly ; embrace his righteousness : accept his government : and though you have been unclean, he will wash you.

Hear, O ye loose companions, whose delight is in

vain and wicked society, to sport away your time in carnal mirth; come in at Wisdom's call, and choose her and her ways, and you shall live.

Hear, O ye scorers, hear the word of the Lord; though you make a sport at godliness and the professors thereof, though you have made a scorn of Christ and of his ways, yet even to you doth he call, to gather you under the wings of his mercy. In a word, though you should be found among the worst of the black roll, yet upon your thorough conversion you shall be washed, you shall be justified, you shall be sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Ho, every formal professor, thou art but a lukewarm Christian, and retest in the form of godliness. Give over thy halting; be throughout a Christian, and be zealous and repent: and then, though thou hast been an offence to Christ, thou shalt be the joy of his heart.

And now confess that mercy hath been offered you. • "I call heaven and earth to record against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that you may live." I can but persuade and warn you; I cannot otherwise compel you to be happy; if I could, I would. What answer will you send me with to my Master? Let me speak to you as Abraham's servant to Nahor's family, "And now if you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me." O for such a happy answer as Rebecca gave them! "And they said, We will call the damsel and inquire at her mouth. And they called Rebecca, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? and she said, I will go." O that I had but this from you! Why

should I be your accuser, who thirst for your salvation? Why should the passionate pleadings of mercy be turned into horrid aggravations of your obstinacy and additions to your misery? Judge in yourselves; do you not think their condemnation will be doubly dreadful, that shall still go on in their sins, after all endeavors to recall them? Doubtless "it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, yea, for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for you!"

Sinners, if you have any pity for your perishing souls, close with the present offers of mercy. If the God that made you have any authority with you, obey his command and come in. If you are not the despisers of grace, and would not shut up the doors of mercy against yourselves, repent and be converted; let not heaven stand open for you in vain; let not the Lord Jesus open his stores, and bid you buy without money and without price in vain; let not his Spirit and ministers strive with you in vain, and leave you now at last unpersuaded, lest the sentence of condemnation go forth against you.

Father of spirits, take the heart in hand that is too hard for my weakness. Do not thou end, though I have done. A word from thy effectual power will do the work. O thou that hast the key of David, that openest and no man shutteth, open thou this heart, as thou didst Lydia's, and let the King of glory enter in. and make this soul thy captive. Let not the tempter harden him in delays; let him not stir from this place, nor take his eyes from these lines, till he resolve to forego his sins, and accept of life on thy self-denying terms. In thy name, O Lord God, did I go

forth to these labors: in thy name do I close them. Let not all the time they have cost be lost hours: let not all the thoughts of the heart, and all the pains that have been about them, be but lost labor. Lord, put thy hand upon the heart of this reader, and send thy Spirit, as once thou didst Philip, to join himself to the chariot of the eunuch while he was reading the word. And though I should never know it while I live, yet I beseech thee, O Lord God, let it be found at the last day that some souls are converted by these labors; and let some be able to stand forth and say, that by these persuasions they were won unto thee. Amen, Amen. Let him that readeth say *Amen*.

COUNSELS FOR THE CONVERTED.

Value no mercy barely as it may promote your temporal welfare, but view it rather in reference to eternity, and as it may serve to advance your Maker's glory.— The cipher put to the figure is of great signification; but set by itself it signifies nothing at all. Creature comforts separated from their respect to God and eternity, are of no value; but, in order to these ends, they signify much. We have ease and fullness when many others are in pain and poverty; and we have much the start of them, if we be wise to improve our health, in laying in apace against a wet day, and preparing apace for eternity, and serving the Lord with more diligence, and cheerfulness, and gladness of heart, in the abundance of all things: but, if this be all we have by it, that our bones lie a little softer, and our palates are tickled with a little more delight, what profit have we by our health and estates? If they that are sick or poor, love and serve the Lord better

than we, they have the advantage of us; and better were it for us to be poor and sick as they are.

Rest not in probabilities for heaven, but labor for certainties.—Beloved, certainty may be had, else the counsel of God to make our calling and election sure is in vain, else the experience of the saints were but delusion, who tell us they “know they are passed from death to life,” else the power of self-reflection were to no purpose, and the spirit which is in man would not know the things of man. Now, if a certainty may be had, will you not try by all means to obtain it? Sirs, you have need to push hard to get assurance, and to get it now. We are ever at miserable uncertainties for all outward enjoyments; we know not how soon we may be called to part with them all. Professing Christians, will you be content to have nothing sure? Will you not settle your everlasting condition, seeing you are so unsettled as to your outward condition? What will you do in the day of visitation, when extremity comes in upon you, if you have no assurance that God will receive you? It would make one’s heart tremble to think of being upon such a fearful temptation as to part with all for Christ, and not to be sure of him neither. O man, what an advantage will the tempter now have upon thee, when he shall suggest, ‘Wilt thou be such a fool as to let go all at once? Thou seest heaven is not sure, Christ is not sure; therefore keep the world whilst thou hast it, and hold what thou hast sure.’ Beloved, what a fearful slighting of God, and contempt of heaven and glory, and all the promises, doth this argue, that you can be content to be at uncertainties whether they be yours or not! How many of you are there that do not know whether you be going

to heaven or hell! And what desperate carelessness doth this argue, to go on from week to week in such a case! Some hopes you have that you shall do well, but put me not off with hopes. Never be satisfied till you are able to say, not only I hope I shall be saved, but I know I am "passed from death to life;" I know that "when the earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved, I have a building not made with hands."

Be not satisfied with some grace; but reach after growth in grace.—Do not think all is done when you have obtained the evidence of grace, but press toward the increase. That person who doth not desire and design perfection, never came up to sincerity. He that desires grace truly, desires it not barely as a bridge to heaven, and so to seek no more than will just bear his charges thither; but he desires it for its own sake, and therefore desires the height of it. That person who desires grace only for heaven's sake, and inquires what is the lowest measure of grace that any may have to come to heaven (by which he means to be saved from misery) upon this design, that if he could but come to that pitch he would desire no more; that person is rotten at the heart. Christians, the Lord doth expect of you that you should not be babes and dwarfs; he looks now especially that you should make some progress. What do you more than heretofore? What! do you feel his spurs in your sides, and his whip at your backs, yet never mend your pace in religion, nor stir one jot the faster? Let me commend you to Paul's study, It argues a base and unworthy spirit to content ourselves with small things in religion.

Labor that holiness may become your nature, and religion your business.—Then you are come to somewhat

indeed in religion, when the work of God is become your natural and beloved employment, your meat and drink, your work and wages; when your tongues and hearts naturally run on God, as others on and of the world. Much of that may be attained by constant care and prayer. Brethren, let God's work be done by you, not by the by, but as your greatest business: "Seek first the kingdom of God;" that so, whatsoever you do, you may be able to give the same account of yourselves that our Savior did when they inquired of him—that you are about your Father's business.

Confine not religion to your knees, but carry on an even thread of holiness through your whole course.—It is the disgrace of religion that Christians are so unlike themselves unless it be when they are in holy duties. This wounds religion to the quick, when it shall be said of professors, These men indeed will pray like angels, but, for aught we can see, they are as peevish and touchy as any other men, and they are as hard in their dealings, and make as little conscience of their words as others do. Beloved, do not think religion lies only or chiefly in praying, hearing, or reading; for you must be throughout religious. Sirs, bring forth your religion out of your closets into your ordinary course; let there not be a life of holiness on the outside of the cloth, but let holiness be woven into the whole of your conversation. Herein consists the excellency and difficulty of religion; when you have the baits of intemperance before you, then to hold the reins hard and deny your flesh; when you have provocation before you, then to restrain your passions and bridle the unruly member; when you have dealings with others, then to proceed by that golden rule of equity and charity to do unto others as you would have them to do

in like case to you; when you are called upon by your several relations, then to behave yourselves with that tenderness and love, with that reverence and obedience, with that courtesy, condescension, and kindness which becomes you in your various capacities. In this, I say, lies the excellence of religion.

Ever walk with your chief end in view.—It is true, according to the usual similitude, the traveler thinks not of his journey's end every step, nor need he; yet he never loses sight of it, it is never out of his mind. Brethren, there is nothing hinders but that, with prayer and watchfulness, you might come to this in every solemn action, to mind God as your chief end. Impose this on yourselves as your daily rule to walk by, never to lie down but with these thoughts, "Well, I will make use of my bed as an ordinance of God, for my natural refreshment, that a servant of his may be fitted for his work." Never to rise up but with these thoughts, "I will set out this day in the name of the Lord, and make it my business throughout the day to please him." Never to set about your callings, but in the entrance think thus, "I will set about my employment in obedience to God, because it is his will I should walk with him in my place and station." Never to sit at your tables but thinking, "I will now eat and drink, not merely to feed my flesh, but to cherish a servant of Christ Jesus, that he may have strength for his service." Charge this upon yourselves, and examine in the evening how you have minded it, and check yourselves wherein you come short. Once learn this and you are come to something, and shall have the undoubted evidence of your sincerity, and shall know by experience the blessed mystery of walking with God.

Be and do more than ordinary in your closets and families.

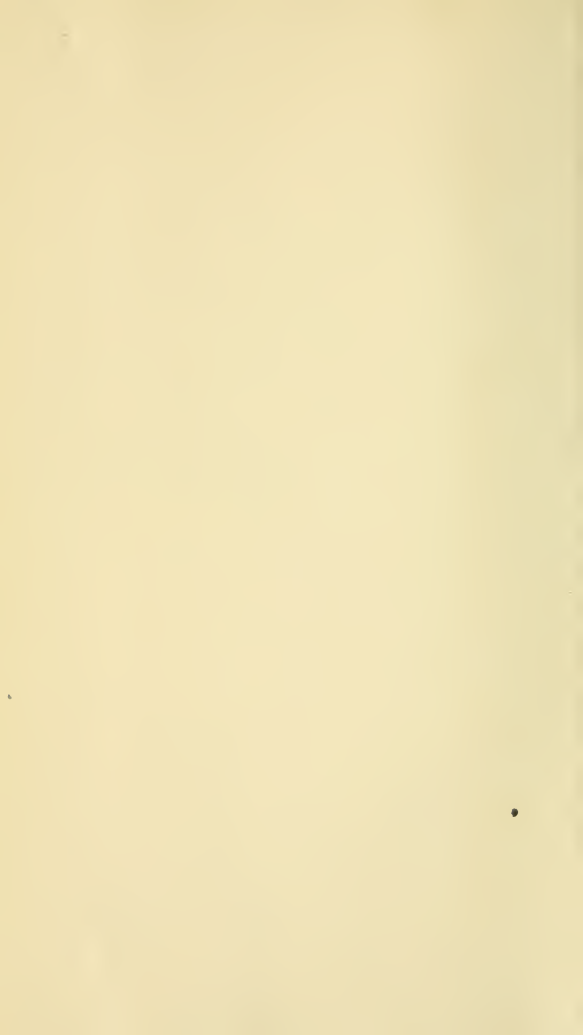
In your closets.—Be more than ever in self-examination. And here let me put it to your consciences: Are you habitual in examining yourselves by the word of God? Do you try yourselves by it daily? Ah, wretched negligence! What, have you given your approbation and yet forget your duty? God expects it of you, that, now you know his will, you should with more zealous fear, and tender circumspection, and holy watchfulness and self-denial, walk before him; else you will greatly excite his indignation.

Finally—In your families. The Lord calls you to set your houses in order. O see what is amiss in them, and strive to cast out whatever may be a provocation.

THE END.



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